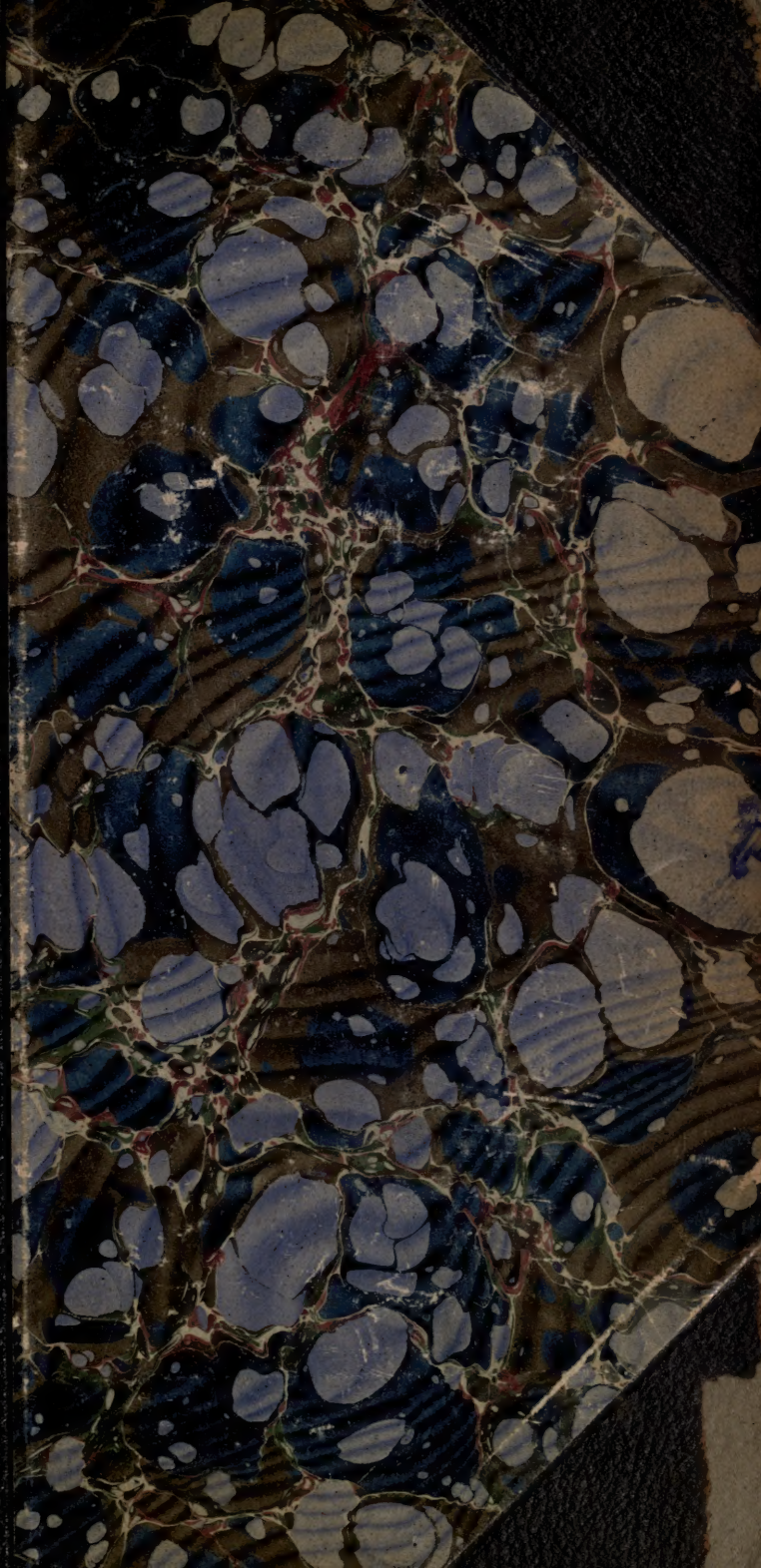
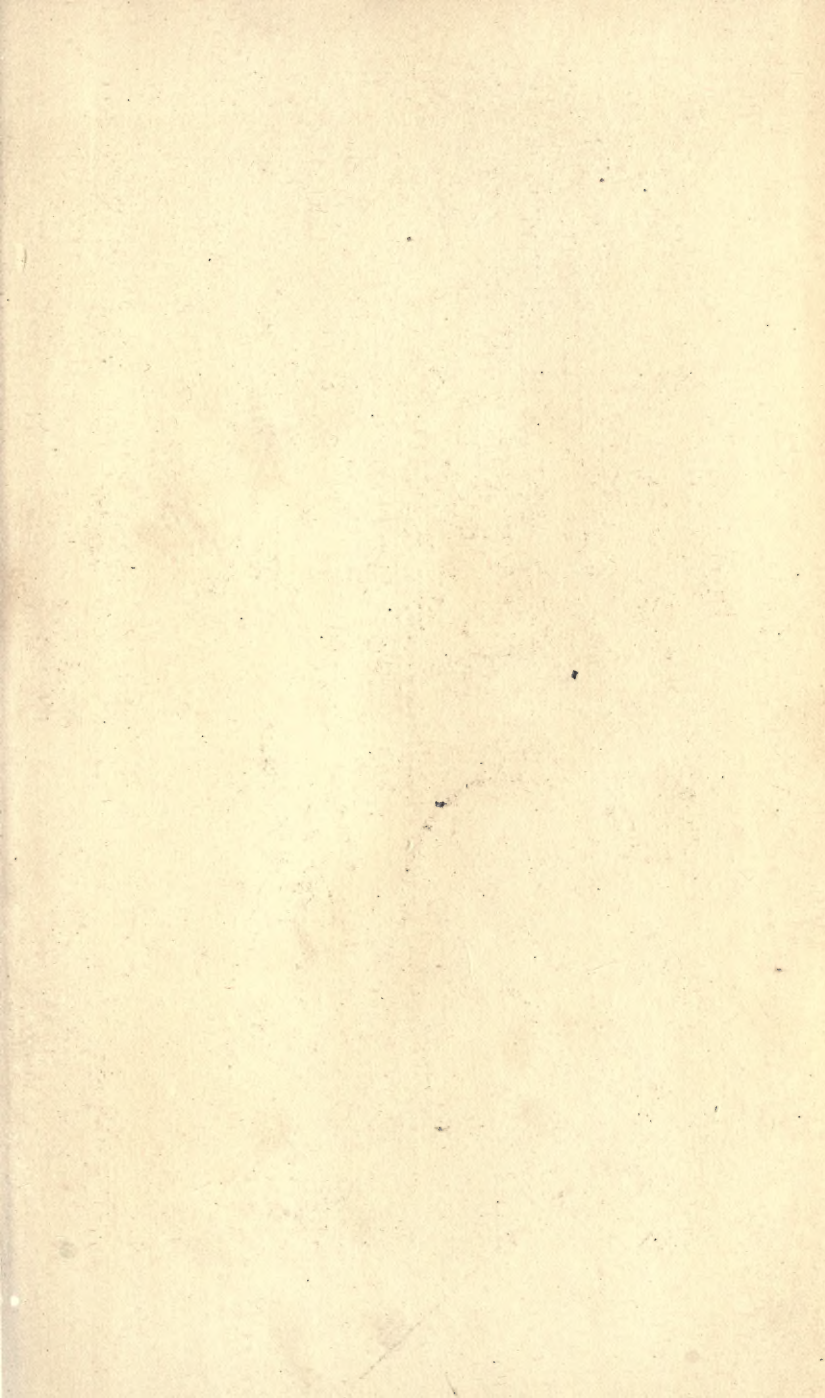






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Illustrated Sterling Edition

ERNEST MALTRAVERS

ALICE

OR

THE MYSTERIES

BY

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON



BOSTON

DANA ESTES & COMPANY

PUBLISHERS



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THE GREAT GERMAN PEOPLE,

A RACE OF THINKERS AND OF CRITICS; A FOREIGN BUT
FAMILIAR AUDIENCE, PROFOUND IN JUDGMENT,
CANDID IN REPROOF, GENEROUS IN
APPRECIATION,

This Work is Dedicated

BY AN ENGLISH AUTHOR.

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1840.

HOWEVER numerous the works of fiction with which, my dear reader, I have trespassed on your attention, I have published but three, of any account, in which the plot has been cast amidst the events and coloured by the manner of our own times. The first of these, "Pelham," composed when I was little more than a boy, has the faults, and perhaps the merits, natural to a very early age, — when the novelty itself of life quickens the observation; when we see distinctly, and represent vividly, what lies upon the surface of the world; and when, half sympathizing with the follies we satirize, there is a gusto in our paintings which atones for their exaggeration. As we grow older we observe less, we reflect more; and, like Frankenstein, we dissect in order to create.

The second novel of the present day¹ which, after an interval of some years, I submitted to the world was one I now for the first time acknowledge, and which (revised and corrected) will be included in this series; namely, "Godolphin," — a work devoted to a particular portion of society and the development of a peculiar class of character. The third, which I now reprint, is "Ernest Maltravers,"²

¹ For "The Disowned" is cast in the time of our grandfathers, and "The Pilgrims of the Rhine" had nothing to do with actual life, and is not, therefore, to be called a novel.

² At the date of this preface "Night and Morning" had not appeared.

— the most mature, and on the whole the most comprehensive, of all that I have hitherto written.

For the original idea — which with humility I will venture to call the philosophical design — of a moral education or apprenticeship, I have left it easy to be seen that I am indebted to Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister." But in "Wilhelm Meister" the apprenticeship is rather that of theoretical art. In the more homely plan that I set before myself, the apprenticeship is rather that of practical life; and with this view it has been especially my study to avoid all those attractions lawful in romance — or tales of pure humour or unbridled fancy, — attractions that in the language of reviewers are styled under the head of "most striking descriptions," "scenes of extraordinary power," etc., and are derived from violent contrasts and exaggerations pushed into caricature. It has been my aim to subdue and tone down the persons introduced, and the general agencies of the narrative, into the lights and shadows of life as it is. I do not mean by "life as it is" the vulgar and the outward life alone, but life in its spiritual and mystic as well as its more visible and fleshly characteristics. The idea of not only describing but developing character under the ripening influences of time and circumstance is not confined to the apprenticeship of Maltravers alone, but pervades the progress of Cesarini, Ferrers, and Alice Darvil.

The original conception of Alice is taken from real life, — from a person I never saw but twice, and then she was no longer young, but whose history made on me a deep impression. Her early ignorance and home; her first love; the strange and affecting fidelity that she maintained, in spite of new ties; her final re-meeting, almost in middle-age, with one lost and adored almost in childhood, — all this, as shown in the novel, is but the imperfect transcript of the true adventures of a living woman.

In regard to Maltravers himself, I must own that I have but inadequately struggled against the great and obvious difficulty of representing an author living in our own times, with whose supposed works or alleged genius, and those of any one actually existing, the reader can establish no identification, — and he is therefore either compelled constantly to humour the delusion by keeping his imagination on the stretch, or lazily driven to confound the author *in* the book with the author *of* the book.¹ But I own also I fancied, while aware of this objection and in spite of it, that so much not hitherto said might be conveyed with advantage through the lips or in the life of an imaginary writer of our own time, that I was contented, on the whole, either to task the imagination or submit to the suspicions of the reader. All that my own egotism appropriates in the book are some occasional remarks, the natural result of practical experience. With the life or the character, the adventures or the humours, the errors or the good qualities, of Maltravers himself I have nothing to do, except as the narrator and inventor.

E. B. L.

¹ In some foreign journal I have been much amused by a credulity of this latter description, and seen the various adventures of Mr. Maltravers gravely appropriated to the embellishment of my own life, including the attachment to the original of poor Alice Darvil, — who now, by the way, must be at least seventy years of age, with a grandchild nearly as old as myself.



A WORD TO THE READER.

PREFIXED TO THE FIRST EDITION OF 1837.

THOU must not, my old and partial friend, look into this work for that species of interest which is drawn from stirring adventures and a perpetual variety of incident. To a novel of the present day are necessarily forbidden the animation, the excitement, the bustle, the pomp, and the stage-effect which history affords to romance. Whatever merits in thy gentle eyes "Rienzi," or "The Last Days of Pompeii," may have possessed, this tale, if it please thee at all, must owe that happy fortune to qualities widely different from those which won thy favour to pictures of the past. Thou must sober down thine imagination, and prepare thyself for a story not dedicated to the narrative of extraordinary events, nor the elucidation of the characters of great men. Though there is scarcely a page in this work episodical to the main design, there may be much that may seem to thee wearisome and prolix, if thou wilt not lend thyself in a kindly spirit and with a generous trust to the guidance of the Author. In the hero of this tale thou wilt find neither a majestic demigod nor a fascinating demon. He is a man with the weaknesses derived from humanity, with the strength that we inherit from the soul, — not often obstinate in error, more often irresolute in virtue; sometimes too aspiring, sometimes too despondent; influenced by the circumstances to which he yet struggles to be superior, and changing in character with the

changes of time and fate; but never wantonly rejecting those great principles by which alone we can work out the Science of Life, — a desire for the Good, a passion for the Honest, a yearning after the True. From such principles, Experience, that severe Mentor, teaches us at length the safe and practical philosophy which consists of fortitude to bear, serenity to enjoy, and faith to look beyond!

It would have led, perhaps, to more striking incidents, and have furnished an interest more intense, if I had cast Maltravers, the Man of Genius, amidst those fierce but ennobling struggles with poverty and want to which genius is so often condemned. But wealth and lassitude have their temptations as well as penury and toil. And for the rest, I have taken much of my tale and many of my characters from real life, and would not unnecessarily seek other fountains when the Well of Truth was in my reach.

The Author has said his say; he retreats once more into silence and into shade; he leaves you alone with the creations he has called to life, — the representatives of his emotions and his thoughts, the intermediators between the individual and the crowd. Children not of the clay, but of the spirit, may they be faithful to their origin! So should they be monitors, not loud but deep, of the world into which they are cast, struggling against the obstacles that will beset them for the heritage of their parent, — the right to survive the grave!

LONDON, *August 12, 1837.*

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ERNEST MALTRAVERS



ERNEST MALTRAVERS.

BOOK I.

Τὸ γὰρ νεδζον ἐν τοιοῖσδε βόσκεται
Χώροισιν αὐτοῦ· καὶ νιν οὐ θάλλος θεοῦ
Οὐδ' ὕμβρος, οὐδὲ πνευμάτων οὐδὲν κλονεῖ
'ΑΛΛ' ἡδοναῖς ἄμοχθον ἐξαίρει βίον.

SOPHOCLES : *Trachin.* 144-147.

"Youth pastures in a valley of its own :
The glare of noon, the rains and winds of heaven
Mar not the calm yet virgin of all care ;
But ever with sweet joys it buildeth up
The airy halls of life."

CHAPTER I.

MY meaning in 't, I protest, was very honest in the behalf of the maid . . . yet who would have suspected an ambush where I was taken ? — *All's Well that Ends Well*, Act. iv. sc. 3.

SOME four miles distant from one of our northern manufacturing towns, in the year 18—, was a wide and desolate common. A more dreary spot it is impossible to conceive; the herbage grew up in sickly patches from the midst of a black and stony soil; not a tree was to be seen in the whole of the comfortless expanse. Nature herself had seemed to desert the solitude, as if scared by the ceaseless din of the neighbouring forges; and even Art, which presses all things into service, had disdained to cull use or beauty from these unpromising demesnes. There was something weird and prime-

val in the aspect of the place, especially when in the long nights of winter you beheld the distant fires and lights, which give to the vicinity of certain manufactories so preternatural an appearance, streaming red and wild over the waste. So abandoned by man appeared the spot that you found it difficult to imagine that it was only from human fires that its bleak and barren desolation was illumined. For miles along the moor you detected no vestige of any habitation; but as you approached the verge nearest to the town you could just perceive at a little distance from the main road, by which the common was intersected, a small, solitary, and miserable hovel.

Within this lonely abode, at the time in which my story opens, were seated two persons. The one was a man of about fifty years of age, and in a squalid and wretched garb, which was yet relieved by an affectation of ill-assorted finery. A silk handkerchief, which boasted the ornament of a large brooch of false stones, was twisted jauntily round a muscular but meagre throat; his tattered breeches were also decorated by buckles,—one of pinchbeck, and one of steel. His frame was lean, but broad and sinewy, indicative of considerable strength. His countenance was prematurely marked by deep furrows, and his grizzled hair waved over a low, rugged, and forbidding brow, on which there hung an everlasting frown that no smile from the lips (and the man smiled often) could chase away. It was a face that spoke of long-continued and hardened vice; it was one in which the Past had written indelible characters. The brand of the hangman could not have stamped it more plainly, nor have more unequivocally warned the suspicion of honest or timid men.

He was employed in counting some few and paltry coins, which, though an easy matter to ascertain their value, he told and retold, as if the act could increase the amount. "There must be some mistake here, Alice," he said in a low and muttered tone; "we can't be so low. You know I had two pounds in the drawer but Monday, and now— Alice, you must have stolen some of the money, curse you!"

The person thus addressed sat at the opposite side of the

smouldering and sullen fire; she now looked quietly up, and her face singularly contrasted that of the man.

She seemed about fifteen years of age, and her complexion was remarkably pure and delicate, even despite the sunburnt tinge which her habits of toil had brought it. Her auburn hair hung in loose and natural curls over her forehead, and its luxuriance was remarkable even in one so young. Her countenance was beautiful,—nay, even faultless,—in its small and child-like features; but the expression pained you, it was so vacant. In repose it was almost the expression of an idiot; but when she spoke or smiled, or even moved a muscle, the eyes, colour, lips, kindled into a life, which proved that the intellect was still there, though but imperfectly awakened.

“I did not steal any, Father,” she said in a quiet voice; “but I should like to have taken some, only I knew you would beat me if I did.”

“And what do you want money for?”

“To get food when I’m hungered.”

“Nothing else?”

“I don’t know.” The girl paused. “Why don’t you let me,” she said, after a while,—“why don’t you let me go and work with the other girls at the factory? I should make money there for you and me both.”

The man smiled—such a smile! It seemed to bring into sudden play all the revolting characteristics of his countenance. “Child,” he said, “you are just fifteen, and a sad fool you are. Perhaps if you went to the factory, you would get away from me; and what should I do without you? No; I think, as you are so pretty, you might get more money another way.”

The girl did not seem to understand this allusion; but repeated, vacantly, “I should like to go to the factory.”

“Stuff!” said the man, angrily; “I have three minds to—”

Here he was interrupted by a loud knock at the door of the hovel.

The man grew pale. “What can that be?” he muttered.

"The hour is late — near eleven. Again — again! Ask who knocks, Alice."

The girl stood for a moment or so at the door; and as she stood, her form rounded yet slight, her earnest look, her varying colour, her tender youth, and a singular grace of attitude and gesture would have inspired an artist with the very ideal of rustic beauty.

After a pause she placed her lips to a chink in the door, and repeated her father's question.

"Pray, pardon me," said a clear, loud, yet courteous voice; "but seeing a light at your window, I have ventured to ask if any one within will conduct me to —. I will pay the service handsomely."

"Open the door, Alley," said the owner of the hut.

The girl drew a large wooden bolt from the door; and a tall figure crossed the threshold.

The new-comer was in the first bloom of youth, perhaps about eighteen years of age, and his air and appearance surprised both sire and daughter. Alone, on foot, at such an hour, it was impossible for any one to mistake him for other than a gentleman; yet his dress was plain and somewhat soiled by dust, and he carried a small knapsack on his shoulder. As he entered, he lifted his hat with somewhat of foreign urbanity, and a profusion of fair brown hair fell partially over a high and commanding forehead. His features were handsome, without being eminently so, and his aspect was at once bold and prepossessing.

"I am much obliged by your civility," he said, advancing carelessly and addressing the man, who surveyed him with a scrutinizing eye, "and trust, my good fellow, that you will increase the obligation by accompanying me to —."

"You can't miss well your way," said the man, surlily; "the lights will direct you."

"They have rather misled me, for they seem to surround the whole common, and there is no path across it that I can see; however, if you will put me in the right road I will not trouble you further."

"It is very late," replied the hurlish landlord, equivocally.

"The better reason why I should be at —. Come, my good friend, put on your hat, and I will give you half a guinea for your trouble."

The man advanced, then halted; again surveyed his guest, and said, "Are you quite alone, sir?"

"Quite."

"Probably you are known at —?"

"Not I. But what matters that to you? I am a stranger in these parts."

"It is full four miles."

"So far, and I am fearfully tired already!" exclaimed the young man with impatience. As he spoke he drew out his watch. "Past eleven too!"

The watch caught the eye of the cottager; that evil eye sparkled. He passed his hand over his brow. "I am thinking, sir," he said in a more civil tone than he had yet assumed, "that as you are so tired and the hour is so late, you might almost as well —"

"What?" exclaimed the stranger, stamping somewhat petulantly.

"I don't like to mention it; but my poor roof is at your service, and I would go with you to — at daybreak tomorrow."

The stranger stared at the cottager, and then at the dingy walls of the hut. He was about, very abruptly, to reject the hospitable proposal, when his eye rested suddenly on the form of Alice, who stood eager-eyed and open-mouthed, gazing on the handsome intruder. As she caught his eye, she blushed deeply and turned aside. The view seemed to change the intentions of the stranger. He hesitated a moment, then muttered between his teeth; and sinking his knapsack on the ground he cast himself into a chair beside the fire, stretched his limbs, and cried gayly, "So be it, my host. Shut up your house again; bring me a cup of beer and a crust of bread, and so much for supper! As for bed, this chair will do vastly well."

"Perhaps we can manage better for you than that chair," answered the host. "But our best accommodation must seem

bad enough to a gentleman; we are very poor people,—hard-working, but very poor.”

“Never mind me,” answered the stranger, busying himself in stirring the fire; “I am tolerably well accustomed to greater hardships than sleeping on a chair in an honest man’s house; and though you are poor, I will take it for granted you are honest.”

The man grinned, and turning to Alice, bade her spread what their larder would afford. Some crusts of bread, some cold potatoes, and some tolerably strong beer composed all the fare set before the traveller.

Despite his previous boasts, the young man made a wry face at these Socratic preparations, while he drew his chair to the board. But his look grew more gay as he caught Alice’s eye; and as she lingered by the table, and faltered out some hesitating words of apology, he seized her hand, and pressing it tenderly, “Prettiest of lasses,” said he,—and while he spoke he gazed on her with undisguised admiration,—“a man who has travelled on foot all day, through the ugliest country within the three seas, is sufficiently refreshed at night by the sight of so fair a face.”

Alice hastily withdrew her hand and went and seated herself in a corner of the room, whence she continued to look at the stranger with her usual vacant gaze, but with a half-smile upon her rosy lips.

Alice’s father looked hard, first at one, then at the other.

“Eat, sir,” said he, with a sort of chuckle, “and no fine words; poor Alice is honest, as you said just now.”

“To be sure,” answered the traveller, employing with great zeal a set of strong, even, and dazzling teeth at the tough crusts,—“to be sure she is. I did not mean to offend you; but the fact is that I am half a foreigner; and abroad, you know, one may say a civil thing to a pretty girl without hurting her feelings or her father’s either.”

“Half a foreigner! why, you talk English as well as I do,” said the host, whose intonation and words were on the whole a little above his station.

The stranger smiled. “Thank you for the compliment,”

said he. "What I meant was, that I have been a great deal abroad; in fact, I have just returned from Germany. But I am English born."

"And going home?"

"Yes."

"Far from hence?"

"About thirty miles, I believe."

"You are young, sir, to be alone."

The traveller made no answer, but finished his uninviting repast and drew his chair again to the fire. He then thought he had sufficiently ministered to his host's curiosity to be entitled to the gratification of his own.

"You work at the factories, I suppose?" said he.

"I do, sir. Bad times."

"And your pretty daughter?"

"Minds the house."

"Have you no other children?"

"No; one mouth besides my own is as much as I can feed, and that scarcely. But you would like to rest now; you can have my bed, sir,—I can sleep here."

"By no means," said the stranger, quickly; "just put a few more coals on the fire, and leave me to make myself comfortable."

The man rose, and did not press his offer, but left the room for a supply of fuel. Alice remained in her corner.

"Sweetheart," said the traveller, looking round and satisfying himself that they were alone, "I should sleep well if I could get one kiss from those coral lips."

Alice hid her face with her hands.

"Do I vex you?"

"Oh, no, sir."

At this assurance the traveller rose, and approached Alice softly. He drew away her hands from her face, when she said gently, "Have you much money about you?"

"Oh, the mercenary baggage!" said the traveller to himself; and then replied aloud, "Why, pretty one? Do you sell your kisses so high, then?"

Alice frowned and tossed the hair from her brow. "If you

have money," she said, in a whisper, "don't say so to Father. Don't sleep if you can help it. I'm afraid — hush, he comes!"

The young man returned to his seat with an altered manner; and as his host entered, he for the first time surveyed him closely. The imperfect glimmer of the half-dying and single candle threw into strong lights and shades the marked, rugged, and ferocious features of the cottager; and the eye of the traveller, glancing from the face to the limbs and frame, saw that whatever of violence the mind might design the body might well execute.

The traveller sank into a gloomy revery. The wind howled, the rain beat; through the casement shone no solitary star, — all was dark and sombre. Should he proceed alone, might he not suffer a greater danger upon that wide and desert moor? Might not the host follow, assault him in the dark? He had no weapon save a stick; but within he had at least a rude resource in the large kitchen poker that was beside him. At all events it would be better to wait for the present; he might at any time, when alone, withdraw the bolt from the door, and slip out unobserved.

Such was the fruit of his meditations while his host plied the fire.

"You will sleep sound to-night," said his entertainer, smiling.

"Humph! Why, I *am* over-fatigued. I dare say it will be an hour or two before I fall asleep; but when I once am asleep, I sleep like a rock."

"Come, Alice," said her father, "let us leave the gentleman. Good-night, sir."

"Good-night, good-night," returned the traveller, yawning.

The father and daughter disappeared through a door in the corner of the room. The guest heard them ascend the creaking stairs; all was still.

"Fool that I am," said the traveller to himself; "will nothing teach me that I am no longer a student at Göttingen, or cure me of these pedestrian adventures? Had it not been for that girl's big blue eyes I should be safe at — by this

time; if, indeed, the grim father had not murdered me by the road. However, we'll balk him yet; another half-hour, and I am on the moor. We must give him time; and in the mean while here is the poker. At the worst it is but one to one; but the churl is strongly built."

Although the traveller thus endeavoured to cheer his courage, his heart beat more loudly than its wont. He kept his eyes stationed on the door by which the cottagers had vanished, and his hand on the massive poker.

While the stranger was thus employed below, Alice, instead of turning to her own narrow cell, went into her father's room.

The cottager was seated at the foot of his bed muttering to himself, and with eyes fixed on the ground.

The girl stood before him, gazing on his face, and with her arms lightly crossed above her bosom.

"It must be worth twenty guineas," said the host, abruptly to himself.

"What is it to you, Father, what the gentleman's watch is worth?"

The man started.

"You mean," continued Alice, quietly, "you mean to do some injury to that young man; but you shall not."

The cottager's face grew black as night. "How," he began in a loud voice, but suddenly dropped the tone into a deep growl,— "how dare you talk to me so! Go to bed; go to bed."

"No, Father."

"No?"

"I will not stir from this room until daybreak."

"We will soon see that," said the man, with an oath.

"Touch me, and I will alarm the gentleman and tell him that —"

"What?"

The girl approached her father, placed her lips to his ear, and whispered, "That you intend to murder him."

The cottager's frame trembled from head to foot; he shut his eyes and gasped painfully for breath. "Alice," said he gently, after a pause,— "Alice, we are often nearly starving."

"I am,—*you* never!"

"Wretch! yes, if I do drink too much one day, I pinch for it the next. But go to bed, I say; I mean no harm to the young man. Think you I would twist myself a rope? No, no; go along, go along!"

Alice's face, which had before been earnest and almost intelligent, now relapsed into its wonted vacant stare.

"To be sure, Father, they would hang you if you cut his throat. Don't forget that. Good-night;" and so saying, she walked to her own opposite chamber.

Left alone, the host pressed his hand tightly to his forehead and remained motionless for nearly half an hour.

"If that cursed girl would but sleep," he muttered at last, turning round, "it might be done at once. And there's the pond behind, as deep as a well; and I might say at daybreak that the boy had bolted. He seems quite a stranger here,—nobody'll miss him. He must have plenty of blunt to give half-a-guinea to a guide across a common! I want money, and I won't work,—if I can help it, at least."

While he thus soliloquized, the air seemed to oppress him; he opened the window, he leaned out,—the rain beat upon him. He closed the window with an oath, took off his shoes, stole to the threshold, and by the candle, which he shaded with his hand, surveyed the opposite door. It was closed. He then bent anxiously forward and listened.

"All's quiet," thought he; "perhaps he sleeps already. I will steal down. If Jack Walters would but come to-night, the job would be done charmingly."

With that he crept gently down the stairs. In a corner at the foot of the staircase lay sundry matters, a few fagots, and a cleaver. He caught up the last. "Aha!" he muttered, "and there's the sledge-hammer somewhere for Walters." Leaning himself against the door, he then applied his eye to a chink which admitted a dim view of the room within, lighted fitfully by the fire.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT have we here ?

A carrion death !

Merchant of Venice, Act ii. sc. 7.

It was about this time that the stranger deemed it advisable to commence his retreat. The slight and suppressed sound of voices, which at first he had heard above in the conversation of the father and child, had died away. The stillness at once encouraged and warned him. He stole to the front door, softly undid the bolt, and found the door locked and the key missing. He had not observed that during his repast, and ere his suspicions had been aroused, his host, in replacing the bar and relocking the entrance, had abstracted the key. His fears were now confirmed. His next thought was the window: the shutter only protected it half way, and was easily removed; but the aperture of the lattice, which only opened in part, like most cottage casements, was far too small to admit his person. His only means of escape was in breaking the whole window,—a matter not to be effected without noise, and consequent risk.

He paused in despair. He was naturally of a strong-nerved and gallant temperament, nor unaccustomed to those perils of life and limb which German students delight to brave; but his heart wellnigh failed him at that moment. The silence became distinct and burdensome to him, and a chill moisture gathered to his brow. While he stood irresolute and in suspense, striving to collect his thoughts, his ear, preternaturally sharpened by fear, caught the faint, muffled sound of creeping footsteps,—he heard the stairs creak. The sound broke the spell. The previous vague apprehension gave way when the danger became actually at hand. His presence of mind returned at once; he went back quickly to the fireplace. seized the poker, and began stirring the fire and coughing

loud, and indicated as vigorously as possible that he was wide awake.

He felt that he was watched; he felt that he was momentarily in peril; he felt that the appearance of slumber would be the signal for a mortal conflict. Time passed,—all remained silent; nearly half an hour had elapsed since he had heard the steps upon the stairs. His situation began to prey upon his nerves,—it irritated them; it became intolerable. It was not now fear that he experienced, it was the overwrought sense of mortal enmity,—the consciousness that a man may feel who knows that the eye of a tiger is on him, and who, while in suspense he has regained his courage, foresees that sooner or later the spring must come; the suspense itself becomes an agony, and he desires to expedite the deadly struggle he cannot shun.

Utterly incapable any longer to bear his own sensations, the traveller rose at last, fixed his eyes upon the fatal door, and was about to cry aloud to the listener to enter, when he heard a slight tap at the window; it was twice repeated, and at the third time a low voice pronounced the name of Darvil. It was clear, then, that accomplices had arrived; it was no longer against one man that he would have to contend. He drew his breath hard, and listened with throbbing ears. He heard steps without upon the plashing soil; they retired,—all was still.

He paused a few minutes, and walked deliberately and firmly to the inner door, at which he fancied his host stationed; with a steady hand he attempted to open the door: it was fastened on the opposite side. "So!" said he, bitterly, and grinding his teeth, "I must die like a rat in a cage. Well, I'll die biting."

He returned to his former post, drew himself up to his full height, and stood grasping his homely weapon, prepared for the worst, and not altogether unelated with a proud consciousness of his own natural advantages of activity, stature, strength, and daring. Minutes rolled on; the silence was broken by some one at the inner door; he heard the bolt gently withdrawn. He raised his weapon with both hands,

and started to find the intruder was only Alice. She came in with bare feet and pale as marble, her finger on her lips.

She approached, she touched him.

"They are in the shed behind," she whispered, "looking for the sledge-hammer; they mean to murder you. Get you gone, quick!"

"How? The door is locked."

"Stay! I have taken the key from his room."

She gained the door, applied the key; the door yielded. The traveller threw his knapsack once more over his shoulder, and made but one stride to the threshold. The girl stopped him. "Don't say anything about it; he is my father,—they would hang him."

"No, no. But you are safe, I trust? Depend on my gratitude. I shall be at — to-morrow,—the best inn; seek me if you can. Which way now?"

"Keep to the left."

The stranger was already several paces distant; through the darkness and in the midst of the rain he fled on, with the speed of youth. The girl lingered an instant, sighed, then laughed aloud; closed and re-barred the door, and was creeping back, when from the inner entrance advanced the grim father and another man, of broad, short, sinewy frame, his arms bare, and wielding a large hammer.

"How?" asked the host. "Alice here, and — Hell and the devil! have you let him go?"

"I told you that you should not harm him."

With a violent oath the ruffian struck his daughter to the ground, sprang over her body, unbarred the door, and, accompanied by his comrade, set off in vague pursuit of his intended victim.

CHAPTER III.

You knew, none so well, of my daughter's flight.

Merchant of Venice, Act iii. sc. 1.

THE day dawned. It was a mild, damp, hazy morning; the sod sank deep beneath the foot, the roads were heavy with mire, and the rain of the past night lay here and there in broad, shallow pools. Towards the town, wagons, carts, pedestrian groups were already moving; and now and then you caught the sharp horn of some early coach, wheeling its be-cloaked outside and be-nightcapped inside passengers along the northern thoroughfare.

A young man bounded over a stile into the road just opposite to the milestone that declared him to be one mile from —.

"Thank Heaven!" he said almost aloud; "after spending the night wandering about morasses like a will-o'-the-wisp, I approach a town at last. Thank Heaven again, and for all its mercies this night! I breathe freely. I am safe."

He walked on somewhat rapidly; he passed a slow wagon, he passed a group of mechanics, he passed a drove of sheep, and now he saw walking leisurely before him a single figure. It was a girl, in a worn and humble dress, who seemed to seek her weary way with pain and languor. He was about also to pass her, when he heard a low cry. He turned, and beheld in the wayfarer his preserver of the previous night.

"Heavens! is it indeed you? Can I believe my eyes?"

"I was coming to seek you, sir," said the girl, faintly. "I too have escaped. I shall never go back to Father; I have no roof to cover my head now."

"Poor child! But how is this? Did they ill-use you for releasing me?"

"Father knocked me down, and beat me again when he came back. But that is not all," she added, in a very low tone.

"What else?"

The girl grew red and white by turns. She set her teeth rigidly, stopped short, and then, walking on quicker than before, replied: "It don't matter: I will never go back,—I'm alone now. What, what shall I do?" and she wrung her hands.

The traveller's pity was deeply moved. "My good girl," said he, earnestly, "you have saved my life, and I am not ungrateful. Here," and he placed some gold in her hand, "get yourself a lodging, food, and rest,—you look as if you wanted them,—and see me again this evening when it is dark and we can talk unobserved."

The girl took the money passively, and looked up in his face while he spoke; the look was so unsuspecting, and the whole countenance was so beautifully modest and virgin-like, that had any evil passion prompted the traveller's last words, it must have fled scared and abashed as he met the gaze.

"My poor girl," said he, embarrassed, and after a short pause, "you are very young, and very, very pretty. In this town you will be exposed to many temptations: take care where you lodge. You have, no doubt, friends here?"

"Friends? What are friends?" answered Alice.

"Have you no relations,—no *mother's kin*?"

"None."

"Do you know where to ask shelter?"

"No, sir; for I can't go where Father goes, lest he should find me out."

"Well, then, seek some quiet inn, and meet me this evening just here, — half a mile from the town, at seven. I will try and think of something for you in the mean while. But you seem tired,—you walk with pain; perhaps it will fatigue you to come,—I mean, you had rather perhaps rest another day."

"Oh, no, no! it will do me good to see you again, sir."

The young man's eyes met hers, and hers were not with-

drawn; their soft blue was suffused with tears,—they penetrated his soul. He turned away hastily, and saw that they were already the subject of curious observation to the various passengers that overtook them. “Don’t forget!” he whispered, and strode on with a pace that soon brought him to the town.

He inquired for the principal hotel, entered it with an air that bespoke that nameless consciousness of superiority which belongs to those accustomed to purchase welcome wherever welcome is bought and sold; and before a blazing fire and no unsubstantial breakfast, forgot all the terrors of the past night, or rather felt rejoiced to think he had added a new and strange hazard to the catalogue of adventures already experienced by Ernest Maltravers.

CHAPTER IV.

CON una Dama tenia
Un galan conversacion.¹

MORATIN: *El Téatro Espanol* (Num. 15).

MALTRAVERS was first at the appointed place. His character was in most respects singularly energetic, decided, and premature in its development; but not so in regard to women,—with them he was the creature of the moment; and driven to and fro by whatever impulse or whatever passion caught the caprice of a wild, roving, and all-poetical imagination, Maltravers was, half unconsciously, a poet,—a poet of action,—and woman was his muse.

He had formed no plan of conduct towards the poor girl he was to meet; he meant no harm to her. If she had been less handsome he would have been equally grateful, and her dress and youth and condition would equally have compelled him to select the hour of dusk for an interview.

¹ “With a dame he held a gallant conversation.”

He arrived at the spot. The winter night had already descended; but a sharp frost had set in,—the air was clear, the stars were bright, and the long shadows slept, still and calm, along the broad road and the whitened fields beyond.

He walked briskly to and fro, without much thought of the interview or its object, half chanting old verses, German and English, to himself, and stopping to gaze every moment at the silent stars.

At length he saw Alice approach; she came up to him timidly and gently. His heart beat more quickly; he felt that he was young, and alone with beauty. "Sweet girl," he said, with involuntary and mechanical compliment, "how well this light becomes you! How shall I thank you for not forgetting me?"

Alice surrendered her hand to his without a struggle.

"What is your name?" said he, bending his face down to hers.

"Alice Darvil."

"And your terrible father,—is he, in truth, your father?"

"Indeed, he is my father and mother too!"

"What made you suspect his intention to murder me? Has he ever attempted the like crime?"

"No; but lately he has often talked of robbery. He is very poor, sir; and when I saw his eye, and when, afterwards, while your back was turned, he took the key from the door, I felt that—that you were in danger."

"Good girl! go on."

"I told him so when we went upstairs. I did not know what to believe when he said he would not hurt you; but I stole the key of the front door, which he had thrown on the table, and went to my room. I listened at my door; I heard him go down the stairs,—he stopped there for some time; and I watched him from above. The place where he was, opened to the field by the back way. After some time I heard a voice whisper him,—I knew the voice; and then they both went out by the back way. So I stole down, and went out and listened: and I knew the other man was John Walters,—I'm afraid of *him*, sir. And then Walters said, says he,

'I will get the hammer, and, sleep or wake, we 'll do it.' And Father said, 'It's in the shed.' So I saw there was no time to be lost, sir, and — and — But you know all the rest."

"But how did you escape?"

"Oh! my father, after talking to Walters, came to my room and beat and — and — frightened me; and when he was gone to bed, I put on my clothes and stole out,—it was just light; and I walked on till I met you."

"Poor child, in what a den of vice you have been brought up!"

"Anan, sir?"

"She don't understand me. — Have you been taught to read and write?"

"Oh, no!"

"But I suppose you have been taught, at least, to say your catechism,—and you pray sometimes?"

"I have prayed to Father not to beat me."

"But to God?"

"God, sir,— what is that?"¹

Maltravers drew back, shocked and appalled. Premature philosopher as he was, this depth of ignorance perplexed his wisdom. He had read all the disputes of schoolmen, whether or not the notion of a Supreme Being is innate; but he had never before been brought face to face with a living creature who was unconscious of a God.

After a pause he said: "My poor girl, we misunderstand each other. You know that there is a God?"

"No, sir."

"Did no one ever tell you who made the stars you now survey,—the earth on which you tread?"

"No."

"And have you never thought about it yourself?"

¹ This ignorance — indeed, the whole sketch of Alice — is from the life; nor is such ignorance, accompanied by what almost seems an instinctive or intuitive notion of right or wrong, very uncommon, as our police reports can testify. In the "Examiner" for, I think, the year 1835, will be found the case of a young girl, ill-treated by her father, whose answers to the interrogatories of the magistrate are very similar to those of Alice to the questions of Maltravers.

"Why should I? What has that to do with being cold and hungry?"

Maltravers looked incredulous. "You see that great building, with the spire rising in the starlight?"

"Yes, sir, sure."

"What is it called?"

"Why, a church."

"Did you never go into it?"

"No."

"What do people do there?"

"Father says one man talks nonsense, and the other folk listen to him."

"Your father is — No matter. Good heavens! what shall I do with this unhappy child?"

"Yes, sir, I am very unhappy," said Alice, catching at the last words; and the tears rolled silently down her cheeks.

Maltravers never was more touched in his life. Whatever thoughts of gallantry might have entered his young head, had he found Alice such as he might reasonably have expected, he now felt that there was a kind of sanctity in her ignorance; and his gratitude and kindly sentiment towards her took almost a brotherly aspect. "You know, at least, what school is?" he asked.

"Yes, I have talked with girls who go to school."

"Would you like to go there too?"

"Oh, no, sir; pray not!"

"What should you like to do, then? Speak out, child. I owe you so much that I should be too happy to make you comfortable and contented in your own way."

"I should like to live with you, sir." Maltravers started, and half smiled and coloured. But looking on her eyes, which were fixed earnestly on his, there was so much artlessness in their soft, unconscious gaze that he saw she was wholly ignorant of the interpretation that might be put upon so candid a confession.

I have said that Maltravers was a wild, enthusiastic, odd being, — he was, in fact, full of strange German romance and metaphysical speculations. He had once shut himself up for

months to study astrology, and been even suspected of a serious hunt after the philosopher's stone; another time he had narrowly escaped with life and liberty from a frantic conspiracy of the young republicans of his University, in which, being bolder and madder than most of them, he had been an active ringleader; it was, indeed, some such folly that had compelled him to quit Germany sooner than himself or his parents desired. He had nothing of the sober Englishman about him. Whatever was strange and eccentric had an irresistible charm for Ernest Maltravers. And agreeably to this disposition, he now revolved an idea that enchanted his mobile and fantastic philosophy. He himself would educate this charming girl; he would write fair and heavenly characters upon this blank page,—he would act the Saint-Preux to this Julie of Nature. Alas! he did not think of the result which the parallel should have suggested. At that age, Ernest Maltravers never damped the ardour of an experiment by the anticipation of consequences.

"So," he said, after a short revery, "so you would like to live with me? But, Alice, we must not fall in love with each other."

"I don't understand, sir."

"Never mind," said Maltravers, a little disconcerted.

"I always wished to go into service."

"Ha!"

"And you would be a kind master."

Maltravers was half disenchanted.

"No very flattering preference," thought he; "so much the safer for us. Well, Alice, it shall be as you wish. Are you comfortable where you are, in your new lodgings?"

"No."

"Why, they do not insult you?"

"No; but they make a noise, and I like to be quiet, to think of you."

The young philosopher was reconciled again to his scheme.

"Well, Alice, go back. I will take a cottage to-morrow, and you shall be my servant, and I will teach you to read and write and say your prayers, and know that you have a Father

above who loves you better than he below. Meet me again at the same hour to-morrow. Why do you cry, Alice? Why do you cry?"

"Because, because," sobbed the girl, "I am so happy, and I shall live with you and see you."

"Go, child,—go, child," said Maltravers, hastily; and he walked away with a quicker pulse than became his new character of master and preceptor.

He looked back, and saw the girl gazing at him; he waved his hand, and she moved on and followed him slowly back to the town.

Maltravers, though not an elder son, was the heir of affluent fortunes; he enjoyed a munificent allowance that sufficed for the whims of a youth who had learned in Germany none of the extravagant notions common to young Englishmen of similar birth and prospects. He was a spoiled child, with no law but his own fancy; his return home was not expected; there was nothing to prevent the indulgence of his new caprice. The next day he hired a cottage in the neighbourhood, which was one of those pretty thatched edifices, with verandas and monthly roses, a conservatory and a lawn, which justify the English proverb about a cottage and love. It had been built by a mercantile bachelor for some Fair Rosamond, and did credit to his taste. An old woman, let with the house, was to cook and do the work; Alice was but a nominal servant. Neither the old woman nor the landlord comprehended the platonic intentions of the young stranger; but he paid his rent in advance, and they were not particular. He, however, thought it prudent to conceal his name; it was one sure to be known in a town not very distant from the residence of his father,—a wealthy and long-descended country gentleman. He adopted, therefore, the common name of Butler,—which, indeed, belonged to one of his maternal connections; and by that name alone was he known in the neighbourhood and to Alice. From her he would not have sought concealment; but, somehow or other, no occasion ever presented itself to induce him to talk much to her of his parentage or birth.

CHAPTER V.

THOUGHT would destroy their paradise. — GRAY.

MALTRAVERS found Alice as docile a pupil as any reasonable preceptor might have desired. But still, reading and writing, they are very uninteresting elements. Had the ground-work been laid, it might have been delightful to raise the fairy palace of knowledge; but the digging the foundations and the constructing the cellars is weary labour. Perhaps he felt it so; for in a few days Alice was handed over to the very oldest and ugliest writing-master that the neighbouring town could afford. The poor girl at first wept much at the exchange; but the grave remonstrances and solemn exhortations of Maltravers reconciled her at last, and she promised to work hard and pay every attention to her lessons. I am not sure, however, that it was the tedium of the work that deterred the idealist,—perhaps he felt its danger,—and at the bottom of his sparkling dreams and brilliant follies lay a sound, generous, and noble heart. He was fond of pleasure, and had been already the darling of the sentimental German ladies. But he was too young and too vivid and too romantic to be what is called a sensualist. He could not look upon a fair face and a guileless smile and all the ineffable symmetry of a woman's shape with the eye of a man buying cattle for base uses. He very easily fell in love,—or fancied he did,—it is true; but then he could not separate desire from fancy, or calculate the game of passion without bringing the heart or the imagination into the matter. And though Alice was very pretty and very engaging, he was not yet in love with her, and he had no intention of becoming so.

He felt the evening somewhat long when, for the first time, Alice discontinued her usual lesson, but Maltravers had abundant resources in himself. He placed Shakspeare and

Schiller on his table, and lighted his German meerschaum; he read till he became inspired, and then he wrote; and when he had composed a few stanzas he was not contented till he had set them to music and tried their melody with his voice, — for he had all the passion of a German for song and music, that wild Maltravers! and his voice was sweet, his taste consummate, his science profound. As the sun puts out a star, so the full blaze of his imagination, fairly kindled, extinguished for the time his fairy fancy for his beautiful pupil.

It was late that night when Maltravers went to bed; and as he passed through the narrow corridor that led to his chamber he heard a light step flying before him, and caught the glimpse of a female figure escaping through a distant door. “The silly child!” thought he, at once divining the cause; “she has been listening to my singing. I shall scold her.” But he forgot that resolution.

The next day, and the next, and many days passed, and Maltravers saw but little of the pupil for whose sake he had shut himself up in a country cottage in the depth of winter. Still, he did not repent his purpose, nor was he in the least tired of his seclusion; he would not inspect Alice’s progress, for he was certain he should be dissatisfied with its slowness, — and people, however handsome, cannot learn to read and write in a day. But he amused himself, notwithstanding. He was glad of an opportunity to be alone with his own thoughts, for he was at one of those periodical epochs of life when we like to pause and breathe a while, in brief respite from that methodical race in which we run to the grave. He wished to re-collect the stores of his past experience, and repose on his own mind, before he started afresh upon the active world. The weather was cold and inclement; but Ernest Maltravers was a hardy lover of Nature, and neither snow nor frost could detain him from his daily rambles. So about noon he regularly threw aside books and papers, took his hat and staff, and went whistling or humming his favourite airs through the dreary streets, or along the bleak waters, or amidst the leafless woods, just as the humour seized him; for he was not an Edwin or Harold, who reserved speculation

only for lonely brooks and pastoral hills. Maltravers delighted to contemplate Nature in men, as well as in sheep or trees. The humblest alley in a crowded town had something poetical for him; he was ever ready to mix in a crowd, if it were only gathered round a barrel-organ or a dog-fight, and listen to all that was said, and notice all that was done. And this I take to be the true poetical temperament essential to every artist who aspires to be something more than a scene-painter. But above all things, he was most interested in any display of human passions or affections; he loved to see the true colours of the heart where they are most transparent,—in the uneducated and poor,—for he was something of an optimist, and had a hearty faith in the loveliness of our nature. Perhaps indeed he owed much of the insight into and mastery over character that he was afterwards considered to display, to his disbelief that there is any wickedness so dark as not to be susceptible of the light in some place or another. But Maltravers had his fits of unsociability, and then nothing but the most solitary scenes delighted him. Winter or summer, barren waste or prodigal verdure, all had beauty in his eyes; for their beauty lay in his own soul, through which he beheld them. From these walks he would return home at dusk, take his simple meal, rhyme or read away the long evenings with such alternation as music or the dreamy thoughts of a young man with gay life before him could afford. Happy Maltravers! youth and genius have luxuries all the Rothschilds cannot purchase. And yet, Maltravers, you are ambitious; life moves too slowly for you; you would push on the wheels of the clock! Fool, brilliant fool! you are eighteen, and a poet! What more can you desire? Bid Time stop forever!

One morning Ernest rose earlier than his wont, and sauntered carelessly through the conservatory which adjoined his sitting-room, observing the plants with placid curiosity (for besides being a little of a botanist, he had odd, visionary notions about the life of plants, and he saw in them a hundred mysteries which the herbalists do not teach us), when he heard a low and very musical voice singing at a little distance.

He listened, and recognized with surprise words of his own which he had lately set to music, and was sufficiently pleased with to sing nightly.

When the song ended, Maltravers stole softly through the conservatory, and as he opened the door which led into the garden, he saw at the open window of a little room which was apportioned to Alice, and juttred out from the building in the fanciful irregularity common to ornamental cottages, the form of his discarded pupil. She did not observe him, and it was not till he twice called her by name that she started from her thoughtful and melancholy posture.

"Alice," said he, gently, "put on your bonnet and walk with me in the garden. You look pale, child; the fresh air will do you good."

Alice coloured and smiled, and in a few moments was by his side. Maltravers, meanwhile, had gone in and lighted his meerschaum; for it was his great inspirer whenever his thoughts were perplexed or he felt his usual fluency likely to fail him, and such was the case now. With this faithful ally he awaited Alice in the little walk that circled the lawn, amidst shrubs and evergreens.

"Alice," said he after a pause; but he stopped short.

Alice looked up at him with grave respect.

"Tush!" said Maltravers; "perhaps the smoke is unpleasant to you. It is a bad habit of mine."

"No, sir," answered Alice; and she seemed disappointed. Maltravers paused, and picked up a snowdrop.

"It is pretty," he said; "do you love flowers?"

"Oh, dearly," answered Alice, with some enthusiasm; "I never saw many till I came here."

"Now then I can go on," thought Maltravers,—why, I cannot say, for I do not see the *sequitur*; but on he went *in medias res*. "Alice, you sing charmingly."

"Ah, sir, you—you—" She stopped abruptly, and trembled visibly.

"Yes, I overheard you, Alice."

"And you are angry?"

"I? Heaven forbid! It is a *talent*; but you don't know

what that is,—I mean it is an excellent thing to have an ear and a voice and a heart for music; and you have all three.”

He paused, for he felt his hand touched; Alice suddenly clasped and kissed it. Maltravers thrilled through his whole frame; but there was something in the girl's look that showed she was wholly unaware that she had committed an unmaidenly or forward action.

“I was so afraid you would be angry,” she said, wiping her eyes as she dropped his hand; “and now I suppose you know all.”

“All?”

“Yes,—how I listened to you every evening, and lay awake the whole night with the music ringing in my ears, till I tried to go over it myself; and so at last I ventured to sing aloud. I like that much better than learning to read.”

All this was delightful to Maltravers,—the girl had touched upon one of his weak points; however, he remained silent. Alice continued,—

“And now, sir, I hope you will let me come and sit outside the door every evening and hear you; I will make no noise, I will be so quiet.”

“What, in that cold corridor, these bitter nights?”

“I am used to cold, sir. Father would not let me have a fire when he was not at home.”

“No, Alice; but you shall come into the room while I play, and I will give you a lesson or two. I am glad you have so good an ear; it may be a means of your earning your own honest livelihood when you leave me.”

“When I— But I never intend to leave you, sir!” said Alice, beginning fearfully and ending calmly.

Maltravers had recourse to the meerschaum.

Luckily, perhaps, at this time they were joined by Mr. Simcox, the old writing-master. Alice went in to prepare her books; but Maltravers laid his hand upon the preceptor's shoulder.

“You have a quick pupil, I hope, sir?” said he.

“Oh! very, very, Mr. Butler; she comes on famously. She practises a great deal when I am away, and I do my best.”

"And," asked Maltravers, in a grave tone, "have you succeeded in instilling into the poor child's mind some of those more sacred notions of which I spoke to you at our first meeting?"

"Why, sir, she was indeed quite a heathen,—quite a Mahometan, I may say; but she is a little better now."

"What have you taught her?"

"That God made her."

"That is a great step."

"And that he loves good girls and will watch over them."

"Bravo! You beat Plato."

"No, sir, I never beat any one, except little Jack Turner; but he is a dunce."

"Bah! What else do you teach her?"

"That the devil runs away with bad girls, and —"

"Stop there, Mr. Simcox. Never mind the devil yet a while. Let her first learn to do good, that God may love her; the rest will follow. I would rather make people religious through their best feelings than their worst,—through their gratitude and affections, rather than their fears and calculations of risk and punishment."

Mr. Simcox stared.

"Does she say her prayers?"

"I have taught her a short one."

"Did she learn it readily?"

"Lord love her, yes! When I told her she ought to pray to God to bless her benefactor, she would not rest till I had repeated a prayer out of our Sunday-school book, and she got it by heart at once."

"Enough, Mr. Simcox; I will not detain you longer."

Forgetful of his untasted breakfast, Maltravers continued his meerschau and his reflections: he did not cease till he had convinced himself that he was but doing his duty to Alice by teaching her to cultivate the charming talent she evidently possessed, and through which she might secure her own independence. He fancied that he should thus relieve himself of a charge and responsibility which often perplexed him. Alice would leave him, enabled to walk the world in an honest

professional path. It was an excellent idea. "But there is danger," whispered Conscience. "Ay," answered Philosophy and Pride, those wise dupes that are always so solemn and always so taken in; "but what is virtue without trial?"

And now every evening when the windows were closed and the hearth burned clear, while the winds stormed and the rain beat without, a lithe and lovely shape hovered about the student's chamber, and his wild songs were sung by a voice which Nature had made even sweeter than his own.

Alice's talent for music was indeed surprising; enthusiastic and quick as he himself was in all he undertook, Maltravers was amazed at her rapid progress. He soon taught her to play by ear; and Maltravers could not but notice that her hand, always delicate in shape, had lost the rude colour and roughness of labour. He thought of that pretty hand more often than he ought to have done, and guided it over the keys when it could have found its way very well without him.

On coming to the cottage he had directed the old servant to provide suitable and proper clothes for Alice; but now that she was admitted "to sit with the gentleman," the crone had the sense, without waiting for new orders, to buy the "pretty young woman" garments, still, indeed, simple, but of better materials and less rustic fashion; and Alice's redundant tresses were now carefully arranged into orderly and glossy curls, and even the texture was no longer the same; and happiness and health bloomed on her downy cheeks and smiled from the dewy lips, which never quite closed over the fresh white teeth, except when she was sad,—but that seemed never, now she was not banished from Maltravers.

To say nothing of the unusual grace and delicacy of Alice's form and features, there is nearly always something of Nature's own gentility in very young women (except, indeed, when they get together and fall a giggling); it shames us men to see how much sooner they are polished into conventional shape than our rough, masculine angles. A vulgar boy requires Heaven knows what assiduity to move three steps,—I do not say like a gentleman, but like a body that has a soul

in it; but give the least advantage of society or tuition to a peasant girl, and a hundred to one but she will glide into refinement before the boy can make a bow without upsetting the table. There is sentiment in all women, and sentiment gives delicacy to thought, and tact to manner. But sentiment with men is generally acquired,—an offspring of the intellectual quality, not, as with the other sex, of the moral.

In the course of his musical and vocal lessons, Maltravers gently took the occasion to correct poor Alice's frequent offences against grammar and accent: and her memory was prodigiously quick and retentive. The very tones of her voice seemed altered in the ear of Maltravers; and, somehow or other, the time came when he was no longer sensible of the difference in their rank.

The old woman-servant, when she had seen how it would be from the first, and taken a pride in her own prophecy as she ordered Alice's new dresses, was a much better philosopher than Maltravers, though he was already up to his ears in the moonlit abyss of Plato, and had filled a dozen commonplace books with criticisms on Kant.

CHAPTER VI.

YOUNG man, I fear thy blood is rosy red,
Thy heart is soft.

D'AGUILAR: *Fiesco*, Act iii. sc. 1.

As education does not consist in reading and writing only, so Alice, while still very backward in those elementary arts, forestalled some of their maturest results in her intercourse with Maltravers. Before the inoculation took effect, she caught knowledge in the natural way; for the refinement of a graceful mind and a happy manner is very contagious, and Maltravers was encouraged by her quickness in music to at-

tempt such instruction in other studies as conversation could afford. It is a better school than parents and masters think for; there was a time when all information was given orally; and probably the Athenians learned more from hearing Aristotle than we do from reading him. It was a delicious revival of Académé,—in the walks, or beneath the rustic porticos of that little cottage,—the romantic philosopher and the beautiful disciple! And his talk was much like that of a sage of the early world, with some wistful and earnest savage for a listener,—of the stars and their courses; of beasts and birds and fishes and plants and flowers, the wide family of Nature; of the beneficence and power of God; of the mystic and spiritual history of Man.

Charmed by her attention and docility, Maltravers at length diverged from lore into poetry. He would repeat to her the simplest and most natural passages he could remember in his favourite poets; he would himself compose verses elaborately adapted to her understanding: she liked the last the best, and learned them the easiest. Never had young poet a more gracious inspiration, and never did this inharmonious world more complacently resolve itself into soft dreams, as if to humour the novitiate of the victims it must speedily take into its joyless priesthood. And Alice had now quietly and insensibly carved out her own avocations,—the tenor of her service. The plants in the conservatory had passed under her care, and no one else was privileged to touch Maltravers's books or arrange the sacred litter of a student's apartment. When he came down in the morning, or returned from his walks, everything was in order, yet, by a kind of magic, just as he wished it,—the flowers he loved best, bloomed, fresh-gathered, on his table; the very position of the large chair, just in that corner by the fireplace, whence, on entering the room, its hospitable arms opened with the most cordial air of welcome, bespoke the presiding genius of a woman; and then, precisely as the clock struck eight, Alice entered, so pretty and smiling and happy looking that it was no wonder the single hour at first allotted to her extended into three.

Was Alice in love with Maltravers? She certainly did not

exhibit the symptoms in the ordinary way; she did not grow more reserved and agitated and timid; there was no worm in the bud of her damask cheek,—nay, though from the first she had been tolerably bold, she was more free and confidential, more at her ease every day; in fact, she never for a moment suspected that she ought to be otherwise. She had not the conventional and sensitive delicacy of girls who, whatever their rank of life, have been taught that there is a mystery and a peril in love; she had a vague idea about girls going wrong, but she did not know that love had anything to do with it,—on the contrary, according to her father, it had connection with money, not love; all that she felt was so natural and so very sinless. Could she help being so delighted to listen to him, and so grieved to depart? What thus she felt, she expressed, no less simply and no less guilelessly; candour sometimes completely blinded and misled him. No, she could not be in love, or she could not so frankly own that she loved him,—it was a sisterly and grateful sentiment.

“The dear girl,—I am rejoiced to think so,” said Maltravers to himself; “I knew there would be no danger.”

Was he not in love himself? The reader must decide.

“Alice,” said Maltravers one evening after a long pause of thought and abstraction on his side, while she was unconsciously practising her last lesson on the piano, “Alice,—no, don’t turn round, sit where you are, but listen to me,—we cannot live always in this way.”

Alice was instantly disobedient; she did turn round, and those great blue eyes were fixed on his own with such anxiety and alarm that he had no resource but to get up and look round for the meerschau. But Alice, who divined by an instinct his lightest wish, brought it to him while he was yet hunting, amidst the further corners of the room, in places where it was certain not to be. There it was, already filled with the fragrant Salonica, glittering with the gilt pastille, which, not too healthfully, adulterates the seductive weed with odours that pacify the repugnant censure of the fastidious,—for Maltravers was an epicurean even in his worst

habits; there it was, I say, in that pretty hand which he had to touch as he took it; and while he lit the weed, he had again to blush and shrink beneath those great blue eyes.

"Thank you, Alice," he said; "thank you. Do sit down, — there, — out of the draught. I am going to open the window, the night is so lovely."

He opened the casement, overgrown with creepers, and the moonlight lay fair and breathless upon the smooth lawn. The calm and holiness of the night soothed and elevated his thoughts; he had cut himself off from the eyes of Alice, and he proceeded with a firm, though gentle voice, —

"My dear Alice, we cannot always live together in this way; you are now wise enough to understand me, so listen patiently. A young woman never wants a fortune so long as she has a good character; she is always poor and despised without one. Now, a good character in this world is lost as much by imprudence as guilt; and if you were to live with me much longer, it would be imprudent, and your character would suffer so much that you would not be able to make your own way in the world. Far, then, from doing you a service, I should have done you a deadly injury, which I could not atone for. Besides, Heaven knows what may happen worse than imprudence; for I am very sorry to say," added Maltravers, with great gravity, "that you are much too pretty and engaging to — to — In short, it won't do. I must go home; my friends will have a right to complain of me if I remain thus lost to them many weeks longer. And you, my dear Alice, are now sufficiently advanced to receive better instruction than I or Mr. Simcox can give you. I therefore propose to place you in some respectable family, where you will have more comfort and a higher station than you have here. You can finish your education, and instead of being taught, you will be thus enabled to become a teacher to others. With your beauty, Alice," and Maltravers sighed, "and natural talents and amiable temper, you have only to act well and prudently to secure at last a worthy husband and a happy home. Have you heard me, Alice? Such is the plan I have formed for you."

The young man thought as he spoke, with honest kindness and upright honour; it was a bitterer sacrifice than perhaps the reader thinks for. But Maltravers, if he had an impassioned, had not a selfish heart; and he felt, to use his own expression, more emphatic than eloquent, that "it would not do" to live any longer alone with this beautiful girl, like the two children whom the good Fairy kept safe from sin and the world in the Pavilion of Roses.

But Alice comprehended neither the danger to herself nor the temptations that Maltravers, if he could not resist, desired to shun. She rose, pale and trembling, approached Maltravers, and laid her hand gently on his arm.

"I will go away when and where you wish,—the sooner the better; to-morrow,—yes, to-morrow. You are ashamed of poor Alice, and it has been very silly in me to be so happy." She struggled with her emotion for a moment, and went on. "You know Heaven can hear me, even when I am away from you; and when I know more, I can pray better; and Heaven will bless you, sir, and make you happy, for I never can pray for anything else."

With these words she turned away and walked proudly towards the door. But when she reached the threshold, she stopped and looked round, as if to take a last farewell. All the associations and memories of that beloved spot rushed upon her, she gasped for breath, tottered, and fell to the ground insensible.

Maltravers was already by her side; he lifted her light weight in his arms; he uttered wild and impassioned exclamations: "Alice, beloved Alice, forgive me; we will never part!" He chafed her hands in his own while her head lay on his bosom, and he kissed again and again those beautiful eyelids till they opened slowly upon him, and the tender arms tightened round him involuntarily.

"Alice," he whispered,— "Alice, dear Alice, I love thee." Alas! it was true; he loved—and forgot all but that love. He was eighteen.

CHAPTER VII.

How like a younker or a prodigal,
The scarfed bark puts from her native bay!

Merchant of Venice.

WE are apt to connect the voice of Conscience with the stillness of midnight. But I think we wrong that innocent hour. It is that terrible "NEXT MORNING," when reason is wide awake, upon which remorse fastens its fangs. Has a man gambled away his all, or shot his friend in a duel; has he committed a crime or incurred a laugh,—it is the *next morning*, when the irretrievable Past rises before him like a spectre; then doth the churchyard of memory yield up its grisly dead; then is the witching hour when the foul fiend within us can least tempt, perhaps, but most torment. At night we have one thing to hope for, one refuge to fly to,—oblivion and sleep. But at morning, sleep is over, and we are called upon coldly to review and re-act and live again the waking bitterness of self-reproach. Maltravers rose a penitent and unhappy man; remorse was new to him, and he felt as if he had committed a treacherous and fraudulent as well as guilty deed. This poor girl, she was so innocent, so confiding, so unprotected, even by her own sense of right. He went downstairs listless and dispirited. He longed yet dreaded to encounter Alice. He heard her step in the conservatory, paused irresolute, and at length joined her. For the first time she blushed and trembled, and her eyes shunned his. But when he kissed her hand in silence, she whispered, "And am I now to leave you?" And Maltravers answered fervently, "Never!" and then her face grew so radiant with joy that Maltravers was comforted despite himself. Alice knew no remorse, though she felt agitated and ashamed; as she had not comprehended the danger, neither was she aware of the fall. In fact, she never thought of herself. Her whole

soul was with him; she gave him back in love the spirit she had caught from him in knowledge.

And they strolled together through the garden all that day, and Maltravers grew reconciled to himself. He had done wrong, it is true; but then perhaps Alice had already suffered as much as she could in the world's opinion by living with him alone, though innocent, so long. And now she had an everlasting claim to his protection,—she should never know shame or want. And the love that had led to the wrong should, by fidelity and devotion, take from it the character of sin.

Natural and commonplace sophistries! “L’homme se pique,” as old Montaigne said,—“Man is his own sharper.” The conscience is the most elastic material in the world. To-day you cannot stretch it over a mole-hill; to-morrow it hides a mountain.

Oh, how happy they were now, that young pair! How the days flew like dreams! Time went on, winter passed away, and the early spring, with its flowers and sunshine, was like a mirror to their own youth. Alice never accompanied Maltravers in his walks abroad, partly because she feared to meet her father, and partly because Maltravers himself was fastidiously averse to all publicity. But then they had all that little world of three acres—lawn and fountain, shrubbery and terrace—to themselves, and Alice never asked if there was any other world without. She was now quite a scholar, as Mr. Simcox himself averred. She could read aloud and fluently to Maltravers, and copied out his poetry in a small, fluctuating hand, and he had no longer to chase throughout his vocabulary for short Saxon monosyllables to make the bridge of intercourse between their ideas. Eros and Psyche are ever united, and Love opens all the petals of the soul. On one subject alone, Maltravers was less eloquent than of yore. He had not succeeded as a moralist, and he thought it hypocritical to preach what he did not practise. But Alice was gentler and purer, and as far as she knew, sweet fool! better than ever,—she had invented a new prayer for herself;

and she prayed as regularly and as fervently as if she were doing nothing amiss. But the code of Heaven is gentler than that of earth, and does not declare that ignorance excuseth not the crime.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME clouds sweep on as vultures for their prey.

No azure more shall robe the firmament,
Nor spangled stars be glorious.

BYRON: *Heaven and Earth.*

It was a lovely evening in April; the weather was unusually mild and serene for the time of year in the northern districts of our isle, and the bright drops of a recent shower sparkled upon the buds of the lilac and laburnum that clustered round the cottage of Maltravers. The little fountain that played in the centre of a circular basin, on whose clear surface the broad-leaved water-lily cast its fairy shadow, added to the fresh green of the lawn,—

“And softè as velvèt the yongè grass,”

on which the rare and early flowers were closing their heavy lids. That twilight shower had given a racy and vigorous sweetness to the air which stole over many a bank of violets and slightly stirred the golden ringlets of Alice as she sat by the side of her entranced and silent lover. They were seated on a rustic bench just without the cottage, and the open window behind them admitted the view of that happy room, with its litter of books and musical instruments, eloquent of the POETRY of HOME.

Maltravers was silent, for his flexile and excitable fancy was conjuring up a thousand shapes along the transparent air, or upon those shadowy violet banks. He was not thinking,

he was imagining. His genius reposed dreamily upon the calm, but exquisite sense of his happiness. Alice was not absolutely in his thoughts, but unconsciously she coloured them all. If she had left his side, the whole charm would have been broken. But Alice, who was not a poet or a genius, *was* thinking, and thinking only of Maltravers. His image was "the broken mirror," multiplied in a thousand faithful fragments over everything fair and soft in that lovely microcosm before her. But they were both alike in one thing, — they were not with the Future, they were sensible of the Present; the sense of the actual life, the enjoyment of the breathing time, was strong within them. Such is the privilege of the extremes of our existence,—Youth and Age. Middle life is never with to-day, its home is in to-morrow,—anxious and scheming and desiring, and wishing this plot ripened and that hope fulfilled, while every wave of the forgotten Time brings it nearer and nearer to the end of all things. Half our life is consumed in longing to be nearer death.

"Alice," said Maltravers, waking at last from his reverie, and drawing that light, childlike form nearer to him, "you enjoy this hour as much as I do."

"Oh, much more!"

"More! and why so?"

"Because I am thinking of you, and perhaps you are not thinking of yourself."

Maltravers smiled, and stroked those beautiful ringlets, and kissed that smooth, innocent forehead, and Alice nestled herself in his breast.

"How young you look by this light, Alice!" said he, tenderly looking down.

"Would you love me less if I were old?" asked Alice.

"I suppose I should never have loved you in the same way if you had been old when I first saw you."

"Yet I am sure I should have felt the same for you if you had been — oh! ever so old!"

"What, with wrinkled cheeks and palsied head and a brown wig and no teeth, like Mr. Simcox?"

"Oh, but you could never be like that! You would always look young; your heart would be always in your face. That dear smile,—ah, you would look beautiful to the last!"

"But Simecox, though not very lovely now, has been, I dare say, handsomer than I am, Alice; and I shall be contented to look as well when I am as old!"

"I should never know you were old, because I can see you just as I please. Sometimes, when you are thoughtful, your brows meet, and you look so stern that I tremble; but then I think of you when you last smiled, and look up again, and though you are frowning still, you seem to smile. I am sure you are different to other eyes than to mine; and time must kill *me* before, in my sight, it could alter *you*."

"Sweet Alice, you talk eloquently, for you talk love."

"My heart talks to you. Ah! I wish it could say all I felt. I wish it could make poetry like you, or that words were music,—I would never speak to you in anything else. I was so delighted to learn music, because when I played I seemed to be talking to you. I am sure that whoever invented music did it because he loved dearly and wanted to say so. I said 'he,' but I think it was a woman. Was it?"

"The Greeks I told you of, and whose life was music, thought it was a god."

"Ah! but you say the Greeks made Love a god. Were they wicked for it?"

"Our own God above is Love," said Ernest, seriously, "as our own poets have said and sung. But it is a love of another nature,—divine, not human. Come, we will go within; the air grows cold for you."

They entered, his arm round her waist. The room smiled upon them its quiet welcome; and Alice, whose heart had not half vented its fulness, sat down to the instrument still to "talk love" in her own way.

But it was Saturday evening. Now, every Saturday, Maltravers received from the neighbouring town the provincial newspaper,—it was his only medium of communication with the great world. But it was not for that communication that he always seized it with avidity and fed on it with interest.

The county in which his father resided bordered on the shire in which Ernest sojourned, and the paper included the news of that familiar district in its comprehensive columns. It therefore satisfied Ernest's conscience and soothed his filial anxieties to read from time to time that Mr. Maltravers was entertaining a distinguished party of friends at his noble mansion of Lisle Court; or that Mr. Maltravers's fox-hounds had met on such a day at something copse; or that Mr. Maltravers, with his usual munificence, had subscribed twenty guineas to the new county jail. And as now Maltravers saw the expected paper laid beside the hissing urn, he seized it eagerly, tore the envelope, and hastened to the well-known corner appropriated to the paternal district. The very first words that struck his eye were these:—

ALARMING ILLNESS OF MR. MALTRAVERS.

We regret to state that this exemplary and distinguished gentleman was suddenly seized on Wednesday night with a severe spasmodic affection. Dr. ——— was immediately sent for, who pronounced it to be gout in the stomach. The first medical assistance from London has been summoned.

P. S. We have just learned, in answer to our inquiries at Lisle Court, that the respected owner is considerably worse; but slight hopes are entertained of his recovery. Captain Maltravers, his eldest son and heir, is at Lisle Court. An express has been despatched in search of Mr. Ernest Maltravers, who, involved by his high English spirit in some dispute with the authorities of a despotic government, had suddenly disappeared from Göttingen, where his extraordinary talents had highly distinguished him. He is supposed to be staying at Paris.

The paper dropped on the floor. Ernest threw himself back on the chair and covered his face with his hands.

Alice was beside him in a moment. He looked up, and caught her wistful and terrified gaze. "Oh, Alice!" he cried bitterly, and almost pushing her away, "if you could but guess my remorse!" Then, springing on his feet, he hurried from the room.

Presently the whole house was in commotion. The gar-

dener, who was always in the house about supper-time, flew to the town for post-horses. The old woman was in despair about the laundress, for her first and only thought was for "master's shirts." Ernest locked himself in his room. Alice, poor Alice!

In little more than twenty minutes the chaise was at the door, and Ernest, pale as death, came into the room where he had left Alice.

She was seated on the floor, and the fatal paper was on her lap. She had been endeavouring in vain to learn what had so sensibly affected Maltravers; for, as I said before, she was unacquainted with his real name, and therefore the ominous paragraph did not even arrest her eye.

He took the paper from her, for he wanted again and again to read it: some little word of hope or encouragement must have escaped him. And then Alice flung herself on his breast. "Do not weep," said he; "Heaven knows I have sorrow enough of my own! My father is dying! So kind, so generous, so indulgent! O God, forgive me! Compose yourself, Alice. You will hear from me in a day or two."

He kissed her, but the kiss was cold and forced. He hurried away; she heard the wheels grate on the pebbles. She rushed to the window; but that beloved face was not visible. Maltravers had drawn the blinds, and thrown himself back to indulge his grief. A moment more, and even the vehicle that bore him away was gone. And before her were the flowers and the starlit lawn and the playful fountain and the bench where they had sat in such heartfelt and serene delight. He was gone; and often, oh, how often! did Alice remember that his last words had been uttered in estranged tones,—that his last embrace had been without love!

CHAPTER IX.

THY due from me

Is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood,
Which nature, love, and filial tenderness
Shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously!

Second Part of Henry IV. Act iv. sc. 4.

It was late at night when the chaise that bore Maltravers stopped at the gates of a park lodge. It seemed an age before the peasant within was aroused from the deep sleep of labour-loving health. "My father," he cried, while the gate creaked on its hinges, "my father,—is he better? Is he alive?"

"Oh! bless your heart, Master Ernest, the squire was a little better this evening."

"Thank Heaven! On, on!"

The horses smoked and galloped along a road that wound through venerable and ancient groves. The moonlight slept soft upon the sward, and the cattle, disturbed from their sleep, rose lazily up and gazed upon the unseasonable intruder.

It is a wild and weird scene, one of those noble English parks at midnight, with its rough forest-ground broken into dell and valley, its never-innovated and mossy grass, overrun with fern, and its immemorial trees, that have looked upon the birth, and look yet upon the graves, of a hundred generations. Such spots are the last proud and melancholy trace of Norman knighthood and old romance left to the laughing landscapes of cultivated England. They always throw something of shadow and solemn gloom upon minds that feel their associations, like that which belongs to some ancient and holy edifice. They are the cathedral aisles of Nature, with their darkened vistas and columned trunks and arches of mighty foliage. But in ordinary times the gloom is pleasing, and more delightful than all the cheerful lawns and sunny slopes

of the modern taste. *Now* to Maltravers it was ominous and oppressive; the darkness of death seemed brooding in every shadow, and its warning voice moaning in every breeze.

The wheels stopped again. Lights flitted across the basement story, and one above, more dim than the rest, shone palely from the room in which the sick man slept. The bell rang shrilly out from amidst the dark ivy that clung around the porch. The heavy door swung back,—Maltravers was on the threshold. His father lived, was better, was awake. The son was in the father's arms.

CHAPTER X.

THE guardian oak
Mourned o'er the roof it sheltered; the thick air
Labour'd with doleful sounds.

ELLIOTT of Sheffield.

MANY days had passed, and Alice was still alone; but she had heard twice from Maltravers. The letters were short and hurried. One time his father was better, and there were hopes; another time, and it was not expected that he could survive the week. They were the first letters Alice had ever received from him. Those *first* letters are an event in a girl's life,—in Alice's life they were a very melancholy one. Ernest did not ask her to write to him,—in fact, he felt at such an hour a repugnance to disclose his real name and receive the letters of clandestine love in the house in which a father lay in death. He might have given the feigned address he had previously assumed, at some distant post-town where his person was not known. But then, to obtain such letters, he must quit his father's side for hours. The thing was impossible. These difficulties Maltravers did not explain to Alice.

She thought it singular he did not wish to hear from her; but Alice was humble. What could she say worth troubling him with, and at such an hour? But how kind in him to write! How precious those letters! And yet they disappointed her, and cost her floods of tears, they were so short, so full of sorrow, there was so little love in them; and "dear," or even "*dearest*, Alice," that uttered by the voice was so tender, looked cold upon the lifeless paper. If she but knew the exact spot where he was, it would be some comfort; but she only knew that he was away, and in grief; and though he was little more than thirty miles distant, she felt as if immeasurable space divided them. However, she consoled herself as she could, and strove to shorten the long, miserable day by playing over all the airs he liked, and reading all the passages he had commended; she should be so improved when he returned! And how lovely the garden would look; for every day its trees and bouquets caught a new smile from the deepening spring. Oh, they would be so happy once more! Alice *now* learned the life that lies in the future; and her young heart had not, as yet, been taught that of that future there is any prophet but Hope!

Maltravers on quitting the cottage had forgotten that Alice was without money; and now that he found his stay would be indefinitely prolonged, he sent a remittance. Several bills were unpaid, some portion of the rent was due; and Alice, as she was desired, intrusted the old servant with a bank-note, with which she was to discharge these petty debts. One evening, as she brought Alice the surplus, the good dame seemed greatly discomposed. She was pale and agitated; or, as she expressed it, had "a terrible fit of the shakes."

"What is the matter, Mrs. Jones? You have no news of him, of — of my — of your master?"

"Dear heart — miss — no," answered Mrs. Jones; "how should I? But I'm sure I don't wish to frighten you; there has been two sich robberies in the neighbourhood!"

"Oh, thank Heaven that's all!" exclaimed Alice.

"Oh! don't go for to thank Heaven for that, miss; it's

a shocking thing for two lone females like us, and them 'ere windows all open to the ground You sees, as I was taking the note to be changed at Mr. Harris's, the great grocer's shop, where all the poor folk was a-buying agin to-morrow" (for it was Saturday night,—the second Saturday after Ernest's departure; from that Hegira Alice dated all her chronology), "and everybody was a-talking about the robberies last night. La, miss, they bound old Betty—you know Betty? A most respectable 'oman, who has known sorrows, and drinks tea with me once a week. Well, miss, they (only think!) bound Betty to the bedpost, with nothing on her but her shift, poor old soul! And as Mr. Harris gave me the change (please to see, miss, it's all right), and I asked for half gould, miss,—it's more convenient,—sich an ill-looking fellow was by me, a-buying o' baccy, and he did so stare at the money that I vows I thought he'd have rin away with it from the counter; so I grabbed it up and went away. But —would you believe, miss?—just as I got into the lane, afore you turns through the gate, I chanced to look back, and there, sure enough, was that ugly fellow close behind, a-running like mad. Oh! I set up such a screech; and young Dobbins was a-taking his cow out of the field, and he perked up over the hedge when he heard me; and the cow, too, with her horns, Lord bless her! So the fellow stopped, and I bustled through the gate and got home. But la, miss, if we are all robbed and murdered!"

Alice had not heard much of this harangue; but what she did hear very slightly affected her strong, peasant-born nerves,—not half so much, indeed, as the noise Mrs. Jones made in double-locking all the doors and barring, as well as a peg and a rusty inch of chain would allow, all the windows; which operation occupied at least an hour and a half.

All at last was still. Mrs. Jones had gone to bed,—in the arms of sleep she had forgotten her terrors,—and Alice had crept upstairs and undressed and said her prayers and wept a little, and with the tears yet moist upon her dark eyelashes had glided into dreams of Ernest. Midnight was passed; the stroke of one sounded unheard from the clock at the foot of

the stairs. The moon was gone; a slow, drizzling rain was falling upon the flowers, and cloud and darkness gathered fast and thick around the sky.

About this time a low, regular, grating sound commenced at the thin shutters of the sitting-room below, preceded by a very faint noise, like the tinkling of small fragments of glass on the gravel without. At length it ceased, and the cautious and partial gleam of a lantern fell along the floor; another moment, and two men stood in the room.

"Hush, Jack!" whispered one; "hang out the glim, and let's look about us."

The dark-lantern, now fairly unmuffled, presented to the gaze of the robbers nothing that could gratify their cupidity.

Books and music, chairs, tables, carpet, and fire-irons, though valuable enough in a house-agent's inventory, are worthless to the eyes of a housebreaker. They muttered a mutual curse.

"Jack," said the former speaker, "we must make a dash at the spoons and forks, and then hey for the money. The old girl had thirty shiners, besides flimsies."

The accomplice nodded consent; the lantern was again partially shaded, and with noiseless and stealthy steps the men quitted the apartment. Several minutes elapsed, when Alice was awakened from her slumber by a loud scream. She started,—all was again silent; she must have dreamed it. Her little heart beat violently at first, but gradually regained its tenor. She rose, however, and the kindness of her nature being more susceptible than her fear, she imagined Mrs. Jones might be ill,—she would go to her. With this idea she began partially dressing herself, when she distinctly heard heavy footsteps and a strange voice in the room beyond. She was now thoroughly alarmed. Her first impulse was to escape from the house; her next, to bolt the door and call aloud for assistance. But who would hear her cries? Between the two purposes she halted irresolute, and remained, pale and trembling, seated at the foot of the bed, when a broad light streamed through the chinks of the door; an instant more and a rude hand seized her.

"Come, mem, don't be fritted, we won't harm you; but where's the gold-dust,—where's the money? The old girl says you've got it. Fork it over."

"Oh, mercy, mercy! John Walters, is that you?"

"Damnation!" muttered the man, staggering back. "So you knows me, then? But you sha'n't peach; you sha'n't scrag me, b—t you!"

While he spoke, he again seized Alice, held her forcibly down with one hand, while with the other he deliberately drew from a side pouch a long case-knife. In that moment of deadly peril the second ruffian, who had been hitherto delayed in securing the servant, rushed forward. He had heard the exclamation of Alice, he heard the threat of his comrade; he darted to the bedside, cast a hurried gaze upon Alice, and hurled the intended murderer to the other side of the room.

"What, man, art mad?" he growled between his teeth. "Don't you know her? It is Alice,—it is my daughter."

Alice had sprung up when released from the murderer's knife, and now, with eyes strained and starting with horror, gazed upon the dark and evil face of her deliverer.

"O God, it is, it is my father!" she muttered, and fell senseless.

"Daughter or no daughter," said John Walters, "I shall not put my scrag in her power; recollect how she fritted us before, when she run away."

Darvil stood thoughtful and perplexed; and his associate approached doggedly, with a look of such settled ferocity as it was impossible for even Darvil to contemplate without a shudder.

"You say right," muttered the father after a pause, but fixing his strong gripe on his comrade's shoulder,— "the girl must not be left here; the cart has a covering. We are leaving the country; I have a right to my daughter,—she shall go with us. There, man, grab the money,—it's on the table; you've got the spoons. Now then—" as Darvil spoke, he seized his daughter in his arms, threw over her a shawl and a cloak that lay at hand, and was already on the threshold.

"I don't half like it," said Walters, grumblingly; "it ben't safe."

"At least it is as safe as murder!" answered Darvil, turning round, with a ghastly grin. "Make haste."

When Alice recovered her senses, the dawn was breaking slowly along desolate and sullen hills. She was lying upon rough straw, the cart was jolting over the ruts of a precipitous, lonely road, and by her side scowled the face of that dreadful father.

CHAPTER XI.

YET he beholds her with the eyes of mind, —
He sees the form which he no more shall meet;
She like a passionate thought is come and gone,
While at his feet the bright rill bubbles on.

ELLIOTT of Sheffield.

It was a little more than three weeks after that fearful night when the chaise of Maltravers stopped at the cottage-door. The windows were shut up; no one answered the repeated summons of the post-boy. Maltravers himself, alarmed and amazed, descended from the vehicle; he was in deep mourning. He went impatiently to the back entrance,—that also was locked; round to the French windows of the drawing-room, always hitherto half-opened, even in the frosty days of winter,—they were now closed like the rest. He shouted in terror, "Alice, Alice!" No sweet voice answered in breathless joy, no fairy step bounded forward in welcome.

At this moment, however, appeared the form of the gardener coming across the lawn. The tale was soon told; the house had been robbed; the old woman at morning found gagged and fastened to her bed-post; Alice flown. A magistrate had been applied to,—suspicion fell upon the fugitive. None knew anything of her origin or name, not even the old

woman. Maltravers had naturally and sedulously ordained Alice to preserve that secret, and she was too much in fear of being detected and claimed by her father not to obey the injunction with scrupulous caution. But it was known, at least, that she had entered the house a poor peasant girl; and what more common than for ladies of a certain description to run away from their lover and take some of his property by mistake? And a poor girl like Alice, what else could be expected? The magistrate smiled, and the constables laughed. After all, it was a good joke at the young gentleman's expense! Perhaps, as they had no orders from Maltravers, and they did not know where to find him, and thought he would be little inclined to prosecute, the search was not very rigorous. But two houses had been robbed the night before. Their owners were more on the alert. Suspicion fell upon a man of infamous character, John Walters; he had disappeared from the place. He had been last seen with an idle, drunken fellow who was said to have known better days, and who at one time had been a skilful and well-paid mechanic, till his habits of theft and drunkenness threw him out of employ; and he had been since accused of connection with a gang of coiners, tried, and escaped from want of sufficient evidence against him. That man was Luke Darvil. His cottage was searched, but he also had fled. The trace of cart-wheels by the gate of Maltravers gave a faint clew to pursuit; and after an active search of some days, persons answering to the description of the suspected burglars, with a young female in their company, were tracked to a small inn, notorious as a resort for smugglers, by the sea-coast. But there every vestige of their supposed whereabouts disappeared.

And all this was told to the stunned Maltravers; the garrulity of the gardener precluded the necessity of his own inquiries, and the name of Darvil explained to him all that was dark to others. And Alice was suspected of the basest and blackest guilt! Obscure, beloved, protected as she had been, she could not escape the calumny from which he had hoped everlastingly to shield her. But did *he* share that hateful thought? Maltravers was too generous and too enlightened.

"Dog!" said he, grinding his teeth and clenching his hands at the startled menial, "dare to utter a syllable of suspicion against her, and I will trample the breath out of your body!"

The old woman, who had vowed that for the 'varsal world she would not stay in the house after such a "night of shakes," had now learned the news of her master's return, and came hobbling up to him. She arrived in time to hear his menace to her fellow-servant.

"Ah! that's right; give it him, your honour. Bless your good heart, that's what I says! 'Miss rob the house?' says I,—'Miss run away? Oh, no! Depend on it, they have murdered her and buried the body!'"

Maltravers gasped for breath; but without uttering another word he re-entered the chaise and drove to the house of the magistrate. He found that functionary a worthy and intelligent man of the world. To him he confided the secret of Alice's birth and his own. The magistrate concurred with him in believing that Alice had been discovered and removed by her father. New search was made, gold was lavished; Maltravers himself headed the search in person. But all came to the same result as before, save that by the descriptions he heard of the person, the dress, the tears of the young female who had accompanied the men supposed to be Darvil and Walters, he was satisfied that Alice yet lived; he hoped she might yet escape and return. In that hope he lingered for weeks, for months, in the neighbourhood; but time passed, and no tidings. He was forced at length to quit a neighbourhood at once so saddened and endeared. But he secured a friend in the magistrate, who promised to communicate with him if Alice returned or her father was discovered. He enriched Mrs. Jones for life, in gratitude for her vindication of his lost and early love; he promised the amplest rewards for the smallest clew; and with a crushed and desponding spirit he obeyed at last the repeated and anxious summons of the guardian to whose care, until his majority was attained, the young orphan was now intrusted.

CHAPTER XII.

SURE there are poets that did never dream
Upon Parnassus. — DENHAM.

Walk sober off, before a sprightlier age
Come tittering on, and shove you from the stage. — POPE.

Hence to repose your trust in me was wise.

DRYDEN: *Absalom and Achitophel*.

MR. FREDERICK CLEVELAND, a younger son of the Earl of Byrnhem, and therefore entitled to the style and distinction of "Honourable," was the guardian of Ernest Maltravers. He was now about the age of forty-three; a man of letters and a man of fashion,—if the last half-obsolete expression be permitted to us, as being at least more classical and definite than any other which modern euphuism has invented to convey the same meaning. Highly educated, and with natural abilities considerably above mediocrity, Mr. Cleveland early in life had glowed with the ambition of an author. He had written well and gracefully, but his success, though respectable, did not satisfy his aspirations. The fact is, that a new school of literature ruled the public, despite the critics,—a school very different from that in which Mr. Cleveland formed his unimpassioned and polished periods. And as that old earl, who in the time of Charles the First was the reigning wit of the court, in the time of Charles the Second was considered too dull even for a butt, so every age has its own literary stamp and coinage, and consigns the old circulation to its shelves and cabinets as neglected curiosities. Cleveland could not become the fashion with the public as an author, though the coteries cried him up and the reviewers adored him, and the ladies of quality and the amateur *dilettanti* bought and bound his volumes of careful poetry and cadenced prose. But Cleveland had high birth and a handsome competence; his manners were delightful, his conversation fluent,

and his disposition was as amiable as his mind was cultured. He became, therefore, a man greatly sought after in society, both respected and beloved. If he had not genius, he had great good sense; he did not vex his urbane temper and kindly heart with walking after a vain shadow and disquieting himself in vain. Satisfied with an honourable and unenvied reputation, he gave up the dream of that higher fame which he clearly saw was denied to his aspirations, and maintained his good-humour with the world, though in his secret soul he thought it was very wrong in its literary caprices. Cleveland never married; he lived partly in town, but principally at Temple Grove,—a villa not far from Richmond. Here, with an excellent library, beautiful grounds, and a circle of attached and admiring friends, which comprised all the more refined and intellectual members of what is termed, by emphasis, "Good Society," this accomplished and elegant person passed a life perhaps much happier than he would have known had his young visions been fulfilled, and it had become his stormy fate to lead the rebellious and fierce Democracy of Letters.

Cleveland was, indeed, if not a man of high and original genius, at least very superior to the generality of patrician authors. In retiring, himself, from frequent exercise in the arena, he gave up his mind with renewed zest to the thoughts and masterpieces of others. From a well-read man, he became a deeply instructed one. Metaphysics and some of the material sciences added new treasures to information more light and miscellaneous, and contributed to impart weight and dignity to a mind that might otherwise have become somewhat effeminate and frivolous. His social habits, his clear sense, and benevolence of judgment, made him also an exquisite judge of all those indefinable nothings, or little things, that, formed into a total, become knowledge of the Great World. I say the "Great World," for of the world without the circle of the great, Cleveland naturally knew but little. But of all that related to that subtle orbit in which gentlemen and ladies move in elevated and ethereal order, Cleveland was a profound philosopher. It was the mode with many of his

admirers to style him the Horace Walpole of the day; but though in some of the more external and superficial points of character they were alike, Cleveland had considerably less cleverness, and infinitely more heart.

The late Mr. Maltravers, a man not, indeed, of literary habits, but an admirer of those who were, an elegant, high-bred, hospitable *seigneur de province*, had been one of the earliest of Cleveland's friends. Cleveland had been his fag at Eton, and he found Hal Maltravers — Handsome Hal! had become the darling of the clubs when he made his own *début* in society. They were inseparable for a season or two; and when Mr. Maltravers married and, enamoured of country pursuits, proud of his old hall, and sensibly enough conceiving that he was a greater man in his own broad lands than in the republican aristocracy of London, settled peaceably at Lisle Court, Cleveland corresponded with him regularly, and visited him twice a year. Mrs. Maltravers died in giving birth to Ernest, her second son. Her husband loved her tenderly, and was long inconsolable for her loss. He could not bear the sight of the child that had cost him so dear a sacrifice.

Cleveland and his sister, Lady Julia Danvers, were residing with him at the time of this melancholy event, and with judicious and delicate kindness, Lady Julia proposed to place the unconscious offender amongst her own children for some months. The proposition was accepted, and it was two years before the infant Ernest was restored to the paternal mansion. During the greater part of that time he had gone through all the events and revolutions of baby life under the bachelor roof of Frederick Cleveland.

The result of this was that the latter loved the child like a father. Ernest's first intelligible word hailed Cleveland as "papa;" and when the urchin was at length deposited at Lisle Court, Cleveland talked all the nurses out of breath with admonitions and cautions and injunctions and promises and threats which might have put many a careful mother to the blush. This circumstance formed a new tie between Cleveland and his friend. Cleveland's visits were now three times a year, instead of twice. Nothing was done for Ernest

without Cleveland's advice; he was not even breeched till Cleveland gave his grave consent. Cleveland chose his school and took him to it, and he spent a week of every vacation in Cleveland's house. The boy never got into a scrape, or won a prize, or wanted a "tip," or coveted a book, but what Cleveland was the first to know of it. Fortunately, too, Ernest manifested by times tastes which the graceful author thought similar to his own. He early developed very remarkable talents and a love for learning,—though these were accompanied with a vigour of life and soul, an energy, a daring, which gave Cleveland some uneasiness, and which did not appear to him at all congenial with the moody shyness of an embryo genius or the regular placidity of a precocious scholar. Meanwhile the relation between father and son was rather a singular one. Mr. Maltravers had overcome his first, not unnatural, repugnance to the innocent cause of his irremediable loss. He was now fond and proud of his boy, as he was of all things that belonged to him; he spoiled and petted him even more than Cleveland did: but he interfered very little with his education or pursuits. His eldest son, Cuthbert, did not engross all his heart, but occupied all his care. With Cuthbert he connected the heritage of his ancient name and the succession of his ancestral estates. Cuthbert was not a genius, nor intended to be one,—he was to be an accomplished gentleman and a great proprietor. The father understood Cuthbert, and could see clearly both his character and career. He had no scruple in managing his education and forming his growing mind. But Ernest puzzled him. Mr. Maltravers was even a little embarrassed in the boy's society; he never quite overcame that feeling of strangeness towards him which he had experienced when he first received him back from Cleveland, and took Cleveland's directions about his health and so forth. It always seemed to him as if his friend shared his right to the child; and he thought 'it a sort of presumption to scold Ernest, though he very often swore at Cuthbert. As the younger son grew up, it certainly was evident that Cleveland did understand him better than his own father did; and so, as I have before said, on Cleve-

land the father was not displeased passively to shift the responsibility of the rearing.

Perhaps Mr. Maltravers might not have been so indifferent, had Ernest's prospects been those of a younger son in general. If a profession had been necessary for him, Mr. Maltravers would have been naturally anxious to see him duly fitted for it. But from a maternal relation Ernest inherited an estate of about four thousand pounds a year, and he was thus made independent of his father. This loosened another tie between them; and so by degrees Mr. Maltravers learned to consider Ernest less as his own son, to be advised or rebuked, praised or controlled, than as a very affectionate, promising, engaging boy, who, somehow or other, without any trouble on his part, was very likely to do great credit to his family and indulge his eccentricities upon four thousand pounds a year. The first time that Mr. Maltravers was seriously perplexed about him was when the boy, at the age of sixteen, having taught himself German and intoxicated his wild fancies with "Werther" and "The Robbers," announced his desire, which sounded very like a demand, of going to Göttingen instead of to Oxford. Never were Mr. Maltravers's notions of a proper and gentlemanlike finish to education more completely and rudely assaulted. He stammered out a negative, and hurried to his study to write a long letter to Cleveland, who, himself an Oxford prize-man, would, he was persuaded, see the matter in the same light. Cleveland answered the letter in person; listened in silence to all the father had to say, and then strolled through the park with the young man. The result of the latter conference was that Cleveland declared in favour of Ernest.

"But, my dear Frederick," said the astonished father, "I thought the boy was to carry off all the prizes at Oxford?"

"I carried off some, Maltravers; but I don't see what good they did me."

"Oh, Cleveland!"

"I am serious."

"But it is such a very odd fancy."

"Your son is a very odd young man."

"I fear he is so; I fear he is, poor fellow! But what will he learn at Göttingen?"

"Languages and independence," said Cleveland.

"And the classics, the classics; you are such an excellent Grecian!"

"There are great Grecians in Germany," answered Cleveland; "and Ernest cannot well unlearn what he knows already. My dear Maltravers, the boy is not like most clever young men. He must either go through action and adventure and excitement in his own way, or he will be an idle dreamer or an impracticable enthusiast all his life. Let him alone. So Cuthbert is gone into the Guards?"

"But he went first to Oxford."

"Humph! What a fine young man he is!"

"Not so tall as Ernest, but —"

"A handsomer face," said Cleveland. "He is a son to be proud of in one way, as I hope Ernest will be in another. Will you show me your new hunter?"

It was to the house of this gentleman, so judiciously made his guardian, that the student of Göttingen now took his melancholy way.



CHAPTER XIII.

BUT if a little exercise you choose,
Some zest for ease, 't is not forbidden here;
Amid the groves you may indulge the Muse,
Or tend the blooms and deck the vernal year.
Castle of Indolence.

THE house of Mr. Cleveland was an Italian villa adapted to an English climate. Through an Ionic arch you entered a domain of some eighty or a hundred acres in extent, but so well planted and so artfully disposed that you could not have

supposed the unseen boundaries enclosed no ampler a space. The road wound through the greenest sward, in which trees of venerable growth were relieved by a profusion of shrubs, and flowers gathered into baskets intertwined with creepers, or blooming from classic vases placed with a tasteful care in such spots as required the *filling up* and harmonized well with the object chosen. Not an old ivy-grown pollard, not a modest and bending willow, but was brought out, as it were, into a peculiar feature by the art of the owner. Without being overloaded or too minutely elaborate (the common fault of the rich man's villa), the whole place seemed one diversified and cultivated garden; even the air almost took a different odour from different vegetation, with each winding of the road; and the colours of the flowers and foliage varied with every view.

At length, when, on a lawn sloping towards a glassy lake overhung by limes and chestnuts, and backed by a hanging wood, the house itself came in sight, the whole prospect seemed suddenly to receive its finishing and crowning feature. The house was long and low. A deep peristyle that supported the roof extended the whole length, and being raised above the basement, had the appearance of a covered terrace; broad flights of steps, with massive balustrades, supporting vases of aloes and orange-trees, led to the lawn; and under the peristyle were ranged statues, Roman antiquities, and rare exotics. On this side the lake another terrace, very broad, and adorned, at long intervals, with urns and sculpture, contrasted the shadowy and sloping bank beyond, and commanded, through unexpected openings in the trees, extensive views of the distant landscape, with the stately Thames winding through the midst. The interior of the house corresponded with the taste without. All the principal rooms, even those appropriated to sleep, were on the same floor. A small but lofty and octagonal hall conducted to a suite of four rooms. At one extremity was a moderately sized dining-room, with a ceiling copied from the rich and gay colours of Guido's "Hours;" and landscapes, painted by Cleveland himself with no despicable skill, were let into the walls. A sin-

gle piece of sculpture, copied from the Piping Faun, and tinged with a flesh-like glow by purple and orange draperies behind it, relieved without darkening the broad and arched window which formed its niche. This communicated with a small picture-room,—not, indeed, rich with those immortal gems for which princes are candidates, for Cleveland's fortune was but that of a private gentleman, though, managed with a discreet if liberal economy, it sufficed for all his elegant desires; but the pictures had an interest beyond that of art, and their subjects were within the reach of a collector of ordinary opulence. They made a series of portraits, some originals, some copies (and the copies were often the best), of Cleveland's favourite authors; and it was characteristic of the man that Pope's worn and thoughtful countenance looked down from the central place of honour. Appropriately enough, this room led into the library,—the largest room in the house; the only one, indeed, that was noticeable from its size, as well as its embellishments. It was nearly sixty feet in length. The bookcases were crowned with bronze busts, while at intervals statues, placed in open arches backed with mirrors, gave the appearance of galleries opening from the book-lined walls, and introduced an inconceivable air of classic lightness and repose into the apartment; with these arches the windows harmonized so well, opening on the peristyle, and bringing into delightful view the sculpture, the flowers, the terraces, and the lake without, that the actual prospects half seduced you into the belief that they were designs by some master-hand of the poetical gardens that yet crown the hills of Rome. Even the colouring of the prospects on a sunny day favoured the delusion, owing to the deep, rich hues of the simple draperies and the stained glass of which the upper panes of the windows were composed. Cleveland was especially fond of sculpture; he was sensible, too, of the mighty impulse which that art has received in Europe within the last half century. He was even capable of asserting the doctrine, not yet sufficiently acknowledged in this country, that Flaxman surpassed Canova. He loved sculpture too, not only for its own beauty, but for the beauti-

fyng and intellectual effect that it produces wherever it is admitted. It is a great mistake, he was wont to say, in collectors of statues to arrange them *pêle-mêle* in one long, monotonous gallery. The single relief or statue or bust or simple urn, introduced appropriately in the smallest apartment we inhabit, charms us infinitely more than those gigantic museums crowded into rooms never entered but for show and without a chill, uncomfortable shiver. Besides, this practice of galleries, which the herd consider orthodox, places sculpture out of the patronage of the public. There are not a dozen people who can afford galleries, but every moderately affluent gentleman can afford a statue or a bust. The influence, too, upon a man's mind and taste created by the constant and habitual view of monuments of the only imperishable art which resorts to physical materials, is unspeakable. Looking upon the Greek marble, we become acquainted, almost insensibly, with the character of the Greek life and literature. That Aristides, that Genius of Death, that fragment of the unrivalled Psyche, are worth a thousand Scaligers!

"Do you ever look at the Latin translation when you read *Æschylus*?" said a schoolboy once to Cleveland.

"That is my Latin translation," said Cleveland, pointing to the *Laocoön*.

The library opened at the extreme end to a small cabinet for curiosities and medals, which, still in a straight line, conducted to a long belvidere terminating in a little circular summer-house that by a sudden wind of the lake below, hung perpendicularly over its transparent tide, and seen from the distance, appeared almost suspended on air, so light were its slender columns and arching dome. Another door from the library opened upon a corridor which conducted to the principal sleeping-chambers; the nearest door was that of Cleveland's private study, communicating with his bedroom and dressing-closet. The other rooms were appropriated to, and named after, his several friends.

Mr. Cleveland had been advised by a hasty line of the movements of his ward, and he received the young man with a smile of welcome, though his eyes were moist and his lips

trembled; for the boy was like his father! A new generation had commenced for Cleveland!

"Welcome, my dear Ernest," said he; "I am so glad to see you that I will not scold you for your mysterious absence. This is your room,—you see your name over the door; it is a larger one than you used to have, for you are a man now. And there is your German sanctum adjoining,—for Schiller and the meerschaum. A bad habit that, the meerschaum, but not worse than the Schiller, perhaps! You see you are in the peristyle immediately. The meerschaum is good for flowers, I fancy, so have no scruple. Why, my dear boy, how pale you are! Be cheered, be cheered! Well, I must go myself, or you will infect me."

Cleveland hurried away; he thought of his lost friend. Ernest sank upon the first chair, and buried his face in his hands. Cleveland's valet entered and bustled about and unpacked the portmanteau and arranged the evening dress. But Ernest did not look up nor speak; the first bell sounded; the second tolled unheard upon his ear. He was thoroughly overcome by his emotions. The first notes of Cleveland's kind voice had touched upon a soft chord that months of anxiety and excitement had strained to anguish, but had never woke to tears. His nerves were shattered,—those strong young nerves! He thought of his dead father when he first saw Cleveland; but when he glanced round the room prepared for him, and observed the care for his comfort and the tender recollection of his most trifling peculiarities everywhere visible, Alice, the watchful, the humble, the loving, the lost Alice rose before him. Surprised at his ward's delay, Cleveland entered the room; there sat Ernest still, his face buried in his hands. Cleveland drew them gently away, and Maltravers sobbed like an infant. It was an easy matter to bring tears to the eyes of that young man; a generous or a tender thought, an old song, the simplest air of music, sufficed for that touch of the mother's nature. But the vehement and awful passion which belongs to manhood when thoroughly unmanned,—this was the first time in which the relief of that stormy bitterness was known to him!

CHAPTER XIV.

MUSING full sadly in his sullen mind. — SPENSER.

There forth issued from under the altar-smoke
A dreadful fiend. — SPENSER.

NINE times out of ten it is over the Bridge of Sighs that we pass the narrow gulf from Youth to Manhood. That interval is usually occupied by an ill-placed or disappointed affection. We recover, and we find ourselves a new being. The intellect has been hardened by the fire through which it has passed. The mind profits by the wrecks of every passion, and we may measure our road to wisdom by the sorrows we have undergone.

But Maltravers was yet *on* the bridge, and for a time, both mind and body were prostrate and enfeebled. Cleveland had the sagacity to discover that the affections had their share in the change that he grieved to witness, but he had also the delicacy not to force himself into the young man's confidence. But by little and little his kindness so completely penetrated the heart of his ward that Ernest one evening told his whole tale. As a man of the world, Cleveland perhaps rejoiced that it was no worse, for he had feared some existing entanglement, perhaps with a married woman. But as a man who was better than the world in general, he sympathized with the unfortunate girl whom Ernest pictured to him in faithful and unflattered colours, and he long forbore consolations which he foresaw would be unavailing. He felt, indeed, that Ernest was not a man "to betray the noon of manhood to a myrtle-shade;" that with so sanguine, buoyant, and hardy a temperament, he would at length recover from a depression which, if it could bequeath a warning, might as well not be wholly divested of remorse. And he also knew that few become either great authors or great men (and he fancied Ernest

was born to be one or the other) without the fierce emotions and passionate struggles through which the Wilhelm Meister of real life must work out his apprenticeship and attain the Master Rank. But at last he had serious misgivings about the health of his ward. A constant and spectral gloom seemed bearing the young man to the grave. It was in vain that Cleveland, who secretly desired him to thirst for a public career, endeavoured to arouse his ambition; the boy's spirit seemed quite broken, and the visit of a political character, the mention of a political work, drove him at once into his solitary chamber. At length his mental disease took a new turn. He became, of a sudden, most morbidly and fanatically — I was about to say religious; but that is not the word: let me call it pseudo-religious. His strong sense and cultivated taste did not allow him to delight in the raving tracts of illiterate fanatics; and yet out of the benign and simple elements of the Scripture he conjured up for himself a fanaticism quite as gloomy and intense. He lost sight of God the Father, and night and day dreamed only of God the Avenger. His vivid imagination was perverted to raise out of its own abyss phantoms of colossal terror. He shuddered aghast at his own creations, and earth and heaven alike seemed black with the everlasting wrath. These symptoms completely baffled and perplexed Cleveland. He knew not what remedy to administer; and to his unspeakable grief and surprise he found that Ernest, in the true spirit of his strange bigotry, began to regard Cleveland — the amiable, the benevolent Cleveland — as one no less out of the pale of grace than himself. His elegant pursuits, his cheerful studies, were considered by the young but stern enthusiast as the miserable recreations of Mammon and the world. There seemed every probability that Ernest Maltravers would die in a madhouse, or, at best, succeed to the delusions without the cheerful intervals of Cowper.

CHAPTER XV.

SAGACIOUS, bold, and turbulent of wit,
Restless, unfixed in principles and place. — DRYDEN.

Whoever acquires a very great number of ideas interesting to the society in which he lives, will be regarded in that society as a man of abilities. — HELVETIUS.

It was just when Ernest Maltravers was so bad that he could not be worse that a young man visited Temple Grove. The name of this young man was Lumley Ferrers, his age was about twenty-six, his fortune about eight hundred a year; he followed no profession. Lumley Ferrers had not what is usually called "genius,"—that is, he had no enthusiasm; and if the word "talent" be properly interpreted as meaning the talent of doing something better than others, Ferrers had not much to boast of on that score. He had no talent for writing, nor for music, nor painting, nor the ordinary round of accomplishments; neither at present had he displayed much of the hard and useful talent for action and business. But Ferrers had what is often better than either genius or talent,—he had a powerful and most acute mind.

He had, moreover, great animation of manner, high physical spirits, a witty, odd, racy vein of conversation, determined assurance, and profound confidence in his own resources. He was fond of schemes, stratagems, and plots,—they amused and excited him; his power of sarcasm, and of argument too, was great, and he usually obtained an astonishing influence over those with whom he was brought in contact. His high spirits and a most happy frankness of bearing carried off and disguised his leading vices of character, which were callousness to whatever was affectionate, and insensibility to whatever was moral. Though less learned than Maltravers, he was on the whole a very instructed man.

He mastered the surfaces of many sciences, became satisfied of their general principles, and threw the study aside, never to be forgotten (for his memory was like a vice), but never to be prosecuted any further. To this he added a general acquaintance with whatever is most generally acknowledged as standard in ancient or modern literature. What is admired only by a few, Lumley never took the trouble to read. Living amongst trifles, he made them interesting and novel by his mode of viewing and treating them. And here indeed was a talent,—it was the talent of social life; the talent of enjoyment to the utmost with the least degree of trouble to himself. Lumley Ferrers was thus exactly one of those men whom everybody calls exceedingly clever, and yet it would puzzle one to say in what he was so clever. It was, indeed, that nameless power which belongs to ability, and which makes one man superior, on the whole, to another, though in many details by no means remarkable. I think it is Goethe who says, somewhere, that in reading the life of the greatest genius, we always find that he was acquainted with some men superior to himself, who yet never attained to general distinction. To the class of these mystical superior men Lumley Ferrers might have belonged; for though an ordinary journalist would have beaten him in the arts of composition, few men of genius, however eminent, could have felt themselves above Ferrers in the ready grasp and plastic vigour of natural intellect. It only remains to be said of this singular young man, whose character as yet was but half developed, that he had seen a great deal of the world, and could live at ease and in content with all tempers and ranks; fox-hunters or scholars, lawyers or poets, patricians or *parvenus*, it was all one to Lumley Ferrers.

Ernest was, as usual, in his own room when he heard, along the corridor without, all that indefinable bustling noise which announces an arrival. Next came a most ringing laugh, and then a sharp, clear, vigorous voice, that ran through his ears like a dagger. Ernest was immediately aroused to all the majesty of indignant sullenness. He walked out on the terrace of the portico to avoid the repetition of the disturbance,

and once more settled back into his broken and hypochondriacal reveries. Pacing to and fro that part of the peristyle which occupied the more retired wing of the house, with his arms folded, his eyes downcast, his brows knit, and all the angel darkened on that countenance which formerly looked as if, like truth, it could shame the devil and defy the world, Ernest followed the evil thought that mastered him, through the Valley of the Shadow. Suddenly he was aware of something, some obstacle which he had not previously encountered. He started, and saw before him a young man of plain dress, gentlemanlike appearance, and striking countenance.

"Mr. Maltravers, I think," said the stranger; and Ernest recognized the voice that had so disturbed him. "This is lucky; we can now introduce ourselves, for I find Cleveland means us to be intimate. Mr. Lumley Ferrers, Mr. Ernest Maltravers. There, now, I am the elder, so I first offer my hand and grin properly. People always grin when they make a new acquaintance! Well, that's settled. Which way are you walking?"

Maltravers could, when he chose it, be as stately as if he had never been out of England. He now drew himself up in displeased astonishment, extricated his hand from the gripe of Ferrers, and saying very coldly, "Excuse me, sir, I am busy," stalked back to his chamber. He threw himself into his chair, and was presently forgetful of his late annoyance, when, to his inexpressible amazement and wrath, he heard again the sharp, clear voice close at his elbow.

Ferrers had followed him through the French casement into the room. "You are busy, you say, my dear fellow. I want to write some letters; we sha'n't interrupt each other, — don't disturb yourself;" and Ferrers seated himself at the writing-table, dipped a pen into the ink, arranged blotting-book and paper before him in due order, and was soon employed in covering page after page with the most rapid and hieroglyphical scrawl that ever engrossed a mistress or perplexed a dun.

"The presuming puppy!" growled Maltravers, half audibly, but effectually roused from himself; and examining with

some curiosity so cool an intruder, he was forced to own that the countenance of Ferrers was not that of a puppy.

A forehead compact and solid as a block of granite overhung small, bright, intelligent eyes of a light hazel; the features were handsome, yet rather too sharp and fox-like; the complexion, though not highly-coloured, was of that hardy, healthy hue which generally betokens a robust constitution and high animal spirits; the jaw was massive, and to a physiognomist betokened firmness and strength of character; but the lips, full and large, were those of a sensualist, and their restless play, and habitual half smile, spoke of gayety and humour, though when in repose there was in them something furtive and sinister.

Maltravers looked at him in grave silence; but when Ferrers, concluding his fourth letter before another man would have got through his first page, threw down the pen and looked full at Maltravers, with a good-humoured but penetrating stare, there was something so whimsical in the intruder's expression of face, and indeed in the whole scene, that Maltravers bit his lip to restrain a smile,—the first he had known for weeks.

"I see you read, Maltravers," said Ferrers, carelessly turning over the volumes on the table,— "all very right. We should begin life with books,—they multiply the sources of employment; so does capital. But capital is of no use unless we live on the interest; books are waste paper unless we spend in action the wisdom we get from thought. Action, Maltravers, action,—that is the life for us. At our age we have passion, fancy, sentiment; we can't read them away or scribble them away; we must live upon them generously, but economically."

Maltravers was struck; the intruder was not the empty bore he had chosen to fancy him. He roused himself languidly to reply. "Life, *Mr. Ferrers*—"

"Stop, *mon cher*, stop! Don't call me 'Mister;' we are to be friends,—I hate delaying that which *must* be, even by a superfluous dissyllable: you are Maltravers, I am Ferrers. But you were going to talk about life. Suppose we *live* a

little while, instead of talking about it. It wants an hour to dinner: let us stroll into the grounds; I want to get an appetite. Besides, I like Nature when there are no Swiss mountains to climb before one can arrive at a prospect. *Allons!*"

"Excuse—" again began Maltravers, half interested, half annoyed.

"I'll be shot if I do. Come!"

Ferrers gave Maltravers his hat, wound his arm into that of his new acquaintance, and they were on the broad terrace by the lake before Ernest was aware of it.

How animated, how eccentric, how easy was Ferrers' talk (for talk it was, rather than conversation, since he had the ball to himself)! Books and men and things, he tossed them about and played with them like shuttlecocks; and then his egotistical narrative of half a hundred adventures, in which he had been the hero, told so that you laughed *at* him and laughed with him.

CHAPTER XVI.

Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east. — MILTON.

HITHERTO Ernest had never met with any mind that had exercised a strong influence over his own. At home, at school, at Göttingen, everywhere, he had been the brilliant and wayward leader of others, persuading or commanding wiser and older heads than his own; even Cleveland always yielded to him, though not aware of it. In fact, it seldom happens that we are very strongly influenced by those *much* older than ourselves. It is the senior of from two to ten years that most seduces and enthralls us. He has the same pursuits, views, objects, pleasures, but more art and experience in them all. He goes with us in the path we are ordained to tread, but from which the elder generation desires

to warn us off. There is very little influence where there is not great sympathy. It was now an epoch in the intellectual life of Maltravers. He met for the first time with a mind that controlled his own. Perhaps the physical state of his nerves made him less able to cope with the half-bullying, but thoroughly good-humoured imperiousness of Ferrers. Every day this stranger became more and more potential with Maltravers. Ferrers, who was an utter egotist, never asked his new friend to give him his confidence; he never cared three straws about other people's secrets, unless useful to some purpose of his own. But he talked with so much zest about himself,—about women and pleasure, and the gay, stirring life of cities,—that the young spirit of Maltravers was roused from its dark lethargy without an effort of its own. The gloomy phantoms vanished gradually; his sense broke from its cloud; he felt once more that God had given the sun to light the day, and even in the midst of darkness had called up the host of stars.

Perhaps no other person could have succeeded so speedily in curing Maltravers of his diseased enthusiasm. A crude or sarcastic unbeliever he would not have listened to; a moderate and enlightened divine he would have disregarded as a worldly and cunning adjuster of laws celestial with customs earthly. But Lumley Ferrers, who, when he argued, never admitted a sentiment or a simile in reply, who wielded his plain iron logic like a hammer, which, though its metal seemed dull, kindled the ethereal spark with every stroke,—Lumley Ferrers was just the man to resist the imagination and convince the reason of Maltravers; and the moment the matter came to argument, the cure was soon completed: for however we may darken and puzzle ourselves with fancies and visions and the ingenuities of fanatical mysticism, no man can mathematically or syllogistically contend that the world which a God made and a Saviour visited was designed to be damned.

And Ernest Maltravers one night softly stole to his room and opened the New Testament and read its heavenly moralities with purged eyes; and when he had done, he fell upon

his knees and prayed the Almighty to pardon the ungrateful heart that, worse than the Atheist's, had confessed his existence, but denied his goodness. His sleep was sweet and his dreams were cheerful. Did he rise to find that the penitence which had shaken his reason would henceforth suffice to save his life from all error? Alas! remorse overstrained has too often reactions as dangerous; and homely Luther says well that "the mind, like the drunken peasant on horseback, when propped on the one side, nods and falls on the other." All that can be said is that there are certain crises in life which leave us long weaker, from which the system recovers with frequent revulsion and weary relapse, but from which, looking back, after years have passed on, we date the foundation of strength or the cure of disease. It is not to mean souls that creation is darkened by a fear of the anger of Heaven.

CHAPTER XVII.

THERE are times when we are diverted out of errors, but could not be preached out of them. There are practitioners who can cure us of one disorder, though in ordinary cases they be but poor physicians, — nay, dangerous quacks. — STEPHEN MONTAGUE.

LUMLEY FERRERS had one rule in life, and it was this, — to make all things and all persons subservient to himself. And Ferrers now intended to go abroad for some years. He wanted a companion, for he disliked solitude; besides, a companion shared the expenses, — and a man of eight hundred a year, who desires all the luxuries of life, does not despise a partner in the taxes to be paid for them. Ferrers at this period rather liked Ernest than not; it was convenient to choose friends from those richer than himself, and he resolved, when he first came to Temple Grove, that Ernest should be his travelling companion. This resolution formed, it was very easy to execute it.

Maltravers was now warmly attached to his new friend, and eager for change. Cleveland was sorry to part with him, but he dreaded a relapse, if the young man were again left upon his hands. Accordingly, the guardian's consent was obtained, a travelling carriage was bought, and fitted up with every imaginable imperial and *malle*. A Swiss (half valet and half courier) was engaged, one thousand a year was allowed to Maltravers, and one soft and lovely morning, towards the close of October, Ferrers and Maltravers found themselves midway on the road to Dover.

"How glad I am to get out of England!" said Ferrers. "It is a famous country for the rich; but here, eight hundred a year, without a profession save that of pleasure, goes upon pepper and salt: it is a luxurious competence abroad."

"I think I have heard Cleveland say that you will be rich some day or other."

"Oh, yes! I have what are called expectations. You must know that I have a kind of settlement on two stools,—the Well-born and the Wealthy; but between two stools— You recollect the proverb! The present Lord Saxingham, once plain Frank Lascelles, and my father, Mr. Ferrers, were first cousins. Two or three relations good-naturedly died, and Frank Lascelles became an earl; the lands did not go with the coronet; he was poor, and married an heiress. The lady died; her estate was settled on her only child,—the handsomest little girl you ever saw. Pretty Florence, I often wish I could look up to you! Her fortune will be nearly all at her own disposal, too, when she comes of age,—now she is in the nursery, 'eating bread and honey.' My father, less lucky and less wise than his cousin, thought fit to marry a Miss Templeton,—a nobody. The Saxingham branch of the family politely dropped the acquaintance. Now, my mother had a brother,—a clever, plodding fellow, in what is called 'business;' he became richer and richer, but my father and mother died, and were never the better for it. And I came of age, and *worth* (I like that expression) not a farthing more or less than this often-quoted eight hundred pounds a year. My rich uncle is married, but has no children. I am, therefore,

heir-presumptive; but he is a saint, and close, though ostentatious. The quarrel between Uncle Templeton and the Saxinghams still continues. Templeton is angry if I see the Saxinghams; and the Saxinghams — my lord, at least — is by no means so sure that I shall be Templeton's heir as not to feel a doubt lest I should some day or other sponge upon his Lordship for a place. Lord Saxingham is in the Administration, you know. Somehow or other, I have an equivocal, amphibious kind of place in London society which I don't like: on one side I am a patrician connection, whom the *parvenu* branches always incline lovingly to; and on the other side I am a half-dependent cadet, whom the noble relations look civilly shy at. Some day, when I grow tired of travel and idleness, I shall come back and wrestle with these little difficulties, conciliate my Methodistical uncle, and grapple with my noble cousin. But now I am fit for something better than getting on in the world. Dry chips, not green wood, are the things for making a blaze! How slow this fellow drives! Hollo, you sir, get on! Mind, twelve miles to the hour! You shall have sixpence a mile. Give me your purse, Maltravers; I may as well be cashier, being the elder and the wiser man: we can settle accounts at the end of the journey. By Jove, what a pretty girl!"

BOOK II.

Θνητῶν δ' ὄφρα τις ἄνθος ἔχῃ πολυήρατον ἥβης,
Κούφον ἔχων θυμὸν, πόλλ' ἀτέλεστα νοεῖ.

SIMONIDES : *In Vit. Hum.*

“He, of wide-blooming youth's fair flower possessed,
Owns the vain thoughts, the heart that cannot rest !”

CHAPTER I.

IL y eut certainement quelque chose de singulier dans mes sentiments pour cette charmante femme.¹ — ROUSSEAU.

It was a brilliant ball at the Palazzo of the Austrian embassy at Naples, and a crowd of those loungers, whether young or old, who attach themselves to the reigning beauty, was gathered round Madame de Ventadour. Generally speaking, there is more caprice than taste in the election of a beauty to the Idalian throne. Nothing disappoints a stranger more than to see for the first time the woman to whom the world has given the golden apple. Yet he usually falls at last into the popular idolatry, and passes with inconceivable rapidity from indignant scepticism into superstitious veneration. In fact, a thousand things besides mere symmetry of feature go to make up the Cytherea of the hour,—tact in society, the charm of manner, a nameless and piquant brilliancy. Where the world find the Graces they proclaim the Venus. Few persons attain pre-eminent celebrity for anything, without some adventitious and extraneous circumstances which have nothing to do with the thing celebrated; some qualities or

¹ “There certainly was something singular in my sentiments for this charming woman.”

some circumstances throw a mysterious or personal charm about them. "Is Mr. So-and-So really such a genius?" "Is Mrs. Such-a-One really such a beauty?" you ask incredulously. "Oh, yes!" is the answer. "Do you know all *about* him or her? Such a thing is said, or such a thing has happened." The idol is interesting in itself, and therefore its leading and popular attribute is worshipped.

Now, Madame de Ventadour was at this time the beauty of Naples; and though fifty women in the room were handsomer, no one would have dared to say so. Even the women confessed her pre-eminence, for she was the most perfect dresser that even France could exhibit. And to no pretensions do ladies ever concede with so little demur as those which depend upon that feminine art which all study, and in which few excel. Women never allow beauty in a face that has an odd-looking bonnet above it, nor will they readily allow any one to be ugly whose caps are unexceptionable. Madame de Ventadour had also the magic that results from intuitive high-breeding, polished by habit to the utmost. She looked and moved the *grande dame*, as if Nature had been employed by Rank to make her so. She was descended from one of the most illustrious houses of France; had married at sixteen a man of equal birth, but old, dull, and pompous,—a caricature rather than a portrait of that great French *noblesse*, now almost, if not wholly, extinct. But her virtue was without a blemish,—some said from pride, some said from coldness. Her wit was keen and court-like,—lively, yet subdued; for her French high-breeding was very different from the lethargic and taciturn imperturbability of the English. All silent people can seem conventionally elegant. A groom married a rich lady; he dreaded the ridicule of the guests whom his new rank assembled at his table. An Oxford clergyman gave him this piece of advice: "Wear a black coat, and hold your tongue!" The groom took the hint, and is always considered one of the most gentlemanlike fellows in the county. Conversation is the touchstone of the true delicacy and subtle grace which make the ideal of the moral mannerism of a court. And there sat Madame de Ventadour, a little apart

from the dancers, with the silent English dandy Lord Taunton, exquisitely dressed and superbly tall, bolt upright behind her chair; and the sentimental German Baron von Schomberg, covered with orders, whiskered and wigged to the last hair of perfection, sighing at her left hand; and the French minister, shrewd, bland, and eloquent, in the chair at her right; and round on all sides pressed and bowed and complimented a crowd of diplomatic secretaries and Italian princes, whose bank is at the gaming-table, whose estates are in their galleries, and who sell a picture, as English gentlemen cut down a wood, whenever the cards grow gloomy. The charming De Ventadour, she had attraction for them all,—smiles for the silent, badinage for the gay, politics for the Frenchman, poetry for the German, the eloquence of loveliness for all! She was looking her best; the slightest possible tinge of rouge gave a glow to her transparent complexion, and lighted up those large, dark, sparkling eyes (with a latent softness beneath the sparkle) seldom seen but in the French, and widely distinct from the unintellectual languish of the Spaniard, or the full and majestic fierceness of the Italian gaze. Her dress of black velvet, and graceful hat with its princely plume, contrasted the alabaster whiteness of her arms and neck. And what with the eyes, the skin, the rich colouring of the complexion, the rosy lips, and the small ivory teeth, no one would have had the cold hypercriticism to observe that the chin was too pointed, the mouth too wide, and the nose, so beautiful in the front face, was far from perfect in the profile.

"Pray was Madame in the Strada Nuova to-day?" asked the German, with as much sweetness in his voice as if he had been vowing eternal love.

"What else have we to do with our mornings, we women?" replied Madame de Ventadour. "Our life is a lounge, from the cradle to the grave, and our afternoons are but the type of our career. A promenade and a crowd,—*voilà tout!* We never see the world except in an open carriage."

"It is the pleasantest way of seeing it," said the Frenchman, dryly.

"I doubt it; the worst fatigue is that which comes without exercise."

"Will you do me the honour to waltz?" said the tall English lord, who had a vague idea that Madame de Ventadour meant she would rather dance than sit still. The Frenchman smiled.

"Lord Taunton enforces your own philosophy," said the minister.

Lord Taunton smiled because every one else smiled,—and besides, he had beautiful teeth; but he looked anxious for an answer.

"Not to-night,—I seldom dance. Who is that very pretty woman? What lovely complexions the English have! And who," continued Madame de Ventadour, without waiting for an answer to the first question, "who is that gentleman,—the young one I mean,—leaning against the door?"

"What, with the dark mustache?" said Lord Taunton. "He is a cousin of mine."

"Oh, no! not Colonel Bellfield, —I know him; how amusing he is! No; the gentleman I mean wears no mustache."

"Oh, the tall Englishman with the bright eyes and high forehead," said the French minister. "He is just arrived,—from the East, I believe."

"It is a striking countenance," said Madame de Ventadour; "there is something chivalrous in the turn of the head. Without doubt, Lord Taunton, he is *noble*?"

"He is what you call *noble*," replied Lord Taunton,— "that is, what we call a 'gentleman;' his name is Maltravers. He lately came of age, and has, I believe, rather a good property."

"Monsieur Maltravers,—only Monsieur?" repeated Madame de Ventadour.

"Why," said the French minister, "you understand that the English *gentilhomme* does not require a De or a title to distinguish him from the *roturier*."

"I know that; but he has an air above a simple *gentilhomme*. There is something *great* in his look,—but it is not, I must own, the conventional greatness of rank; perhaps he would have looked the same had he been born a peasant."

"You don't think him handsome?" said Lord Taunton, almost angrily (for he was one of the Beauty-men, and Beauty-men are sometimes jealous).

"Handsome! I did not say that," replied Madame de Ventadour, smiling; "it is rather a fine head than a handsome face. Is he clever, I wonder? But all you English, milord, are well educated."

"Yes, profound,—profound; we are profound, not superficial," replied Lord Taunton, drawing down his wristbands.

"Will Madame de Ventadour allow me to present to her one of my countrymen?" said the English minister, approaching,— "Mr. Maltravers."

Madame de Ventadour half smiled and half blushed as she looked up and saw bent admiringly upon her the proud and earnest countenance she had remarked.

The introduction made, a few monosyllables exchanged, the French diplomatist rose and walked away with the English one. Maltravers succeeded to the vacant chair.

"Have you been long abroad?" asked Madame de Ventadour.

"Only four years; yet long enough to ask whether I should not be most abroad in England."

"You have been in the East,—I envy you! And Greece and Egypt,—all the associations! You have travelled back into the Past; you have escaped, as Madame d'Epinay wished, out of civilization and into romance!"

"Yet Madame d'Epinay passed her own life in making pretty romances out of a very agreeable civilization," said Maltravers, smiling.

"You know her Memoirs, then?" said Madame de Ventadour, slightly colouring. "In the current of a more exciting literature few have had time for the second-rate writings of a past century."

"Are not those second-rate performances often the most charming," said Maltravers, "when the mediocrity of the intellect seems almost as if it were the effect of a touching, though too feeble, delicacy of sentiment? Madame d'Epinay's Memoirs are of this character. She was not a virtuous

woman, but she felt virtue and loved it; she was not a woman of genius, but she was tremblingly alive to all the influences of genius. Some persons seem born with the temperament and the tastes of genius without its creative power; they have its nervous system, but something is wanting in the intellectual; they feel acutely, yet express tamely. These persons always have in their character an unspeakable kind of pathos. A court civilization produces many of them, and the French memoirs of the last century are particularly fraught with such examples. This is interesting,—the struggle of sensitive minds against the lethargy of a society, dull, yet brilliant, that *glares* them, as it were, to sleep. It comes home to us; for," added Maltravers, with a slight change of voice, "how many of us fancy we see our own image in the mirror!"

And where was the German baron? Flirting at the other end of the room. And the English lord? Dropping monosyllables to dandies by the doorway. And the minor satellites? Dancing, whispering, making love, or sipping lemonade. And Madame de Ventadour was alone with the young stranger in a crowd of eight hundred persons; and their lips spoke of sentiment, and their eyes involuntarily applied it!

While they were thus conversing, Maltravers was suddenly startled by hearing close behind him a sharp, significant voice, saying in French, "*Hein, hein!* I've my suspicions; I've my suspicions."

Madame de Ventadour looked round with a smile. "It is only my husband," said she, quietly; "let me introduce him to you."

Maltravers rose and bowed to a little thin man most elaborately dressed, and with an immense pair of spectacles upon a long, sharp nose.

"Charmed to make your acquaintance, sir!" said M. de Ventadour. "Have you been long in Naples? Beautiful weather,—won't last long; *hein, hein*. I've my suspicions! No news as to your parliament,—be dissolved soon! Bad opera in London this year! *Hein, hein!* I've my suspicions."

This rapid monologue was delivered with appropriate gesture. Each new sentence M. de Ventadour began with a sort of bow; and when it dropped in the almost invariable conclusion affirmative of his shrewdness and incredulity, he made a mystical sign with his forefinger by passing it upward in a parallel line with his nose, which at the same time performed its own part in the ceremony by three convulsive twitches that seemed to shake the bridge to its base.

Maltravers looked with mute surprise upon the connubial partner of the graceful creature by his side, and M. de Ventadour, who had said as much as he thought necessary, wound up his eloquence by expressing the rapture it would give him to see M. Maltravers at his hôtel. Then; turning to his wife, he began assuring her of the lateness of the hour and the expediency of departure. Maltravers glided away, and as he regained the door was seized by our old friend Lumley Ferrers. "Come, my dear fellow," said the latter; "I have been waiting for you this half hour. *Allons!* But perhaps, as I am dying to go to bed, you have made up your mind to stay supper. Some people have no regard for other people's feelings."

"No, Ferrers, I'm at your service;" and the young man descended the stairs and passed along the Chiaja towards their hotel. As they gained the broad and open space on which it stood, with the lovely sea before them, sleeping in the arms of the curving shore, Maltravers, who had hitherto listened in silence to the volubility of his companion, paused abruptly.

"Look at that sea, Ferrers! What a scene; what delicious air! How soft this moonlight! Can you not fancy the old Greek adventurers, when they first colonized this divine Parthenope,—the darling of the ocean,—gazing along those waves and pining no more for Greece?"

"I cannot fancy anything of the sort," said Ferrers. "And, depend upon it, the said gentlemen, at this hour of the night, unless they were on some piratical excursion,—for they were cursed ruffians, those old Greek colonists,—were fast asleep in their beds."

"Did you ever write poetry, Ferrers?"

"To be sure; all clever men have written poetry once in their lives,—small-pox and poetry, they are our two juvenile diseases."

"And did you ever *feel* poetry?"

"Feel it?"

"Yes. If you put the moon into your verses, did you first feel it shining into your heart?"

"My dear Maltravers, if I put the moon into my verses, in all probability it was to rhyme to 'noon.' 'The night was at her noon' is a capital ending for the first hexameter, and the moon is booked for the next stage. Come in."

"No, I shall stay out."

"Don't be nonsensical."

"By moonlight there is no nonsense like common-sense."

"What! we, who have climbed the Pyramids, and sailed up the Nile, and seen magic at Cairo, and been nearly murdered, bagged, and Bosphorized at Constantinople,—is it for us, who have gone through so many adventures, looked on so many scenes, and crowded into four years events that would have satisfied the appetite of a cormorant in romance, if it had lived to the age of a phoenix,—is it for us to be doing the pretty and sighing to the moon, like a black-haired apprentice without a neckcloth on board of the Margate hoy? Nonsense, I say; we have lived too much not to have lived away our green sickness of sentiment."

"Perhaps you are right, Ferrers," said Maltravers, smiling. "But I can still enjoy a beautiful night."

"Oh! if you like flies in *your* soup, as the man said to his guest, when he carefully replaced those entomological blackmoors in the tureen, after helping himself,—if you like flies in your soup, well and good; *buona notte*."

Ferrers certainly was right in his theory that when we have known real adventures we grow less morbidly sentimental. Life is a sleep in which we dream most at the commencement and the close; the middle part absorbs us too much for dreams. But still, as Maltravers said, we can enjoy a fine night, especially on the shores of Naples.

Maltravers paced musingly to and fro for some time. His heart was softened, — old rhymes rang in his ear, old memories passed through his brain; but the sweet, dark eyes of Madame de Ventadour shone forth through every shadow of the past. Delicious intoxication, the draught of the rose-coloured phial, — which is fancy, but seems love!

CHAPTER II.

THEN gan the Palmer thus: "Most wretched man,
That to affections dost the bridle lend,
In their beginnings they are weak and wan,
But soon, through suffrance, growe to fearfull end;
While they are weak, betimes with them contend."

SPENSER.

MALTRAVERS went frequently to the house of Madame de Ventadour; it was open twice a week to the world, and thrice a week to friends. Maltravers was soon of the latter class. Madame de Ventadour had been in England in her childhood, for her parents had been *émigrés*. She spoke English well and fluently; and this pleased Maltravers, for though the French language was sufficiently familiar to him, he was like most who are more vain of the mind than the person, and proudly averse to hazarding his best thoughts in the domino of a foreign language. We don't care how faulty the accent or how incorrect the idiom in which we talk nothings; but if we utter any of the poetry within us, we shudder at the risk of the most trifling solecism.

This was especially the case with Maltravers; for besides being now somewhat ripened from his careless boyhood into a proud and fastidious man, he had a natural love for the Becoming. This love was unconsciously visible in trifles, — it is the natural parent of Good Taste. And it was indeed an inborn good taste which redeemed Ernest's natural care-

lessness in those personal matters in which young men usually take a pride. An habitual and soldier-like neatness, and a love of order and symmetry, stood with him in the stead of elaborate attention to equipage and dress.

Maltravers had not thought twice in his life whether he was handsome or not; and, like most men who have a knowledge of the gentler sex, he knew that beauty had little to do with engaging the love of women. The air, the manner, the tone, the conversation, the something that interests, and the something to be proud of,—these are the attributes of the man made to be loved. And the Beauty-man is, nine times out of ten, little more than the oracle of his aunts and the "*Sich* a love!" of the housemaids!

To return from this digression: Maltravers was glad that he could talk in his own language to Madame de Ventadour, and the conversation between them generally began in French, and glided away into English. Madame de Ventadour was eloquent, and so was Maltravers; yet a more complete contrast in their mental views and conversational peculiarities can scarcely be conceived. Madame de Ventadour viewed everything as a woman of the world. She was brilliant, thoughtful, and not without delicacy and tenderness of sentiment; still, all was cast in a worldly mould. She had been formed by the influences of society, and her mind betrayed its education. At once witty and melancholy (no uncommon union), she was a disciple of the sad but caustic philosophy produced by *satiety*. In the life she led, neither her heart nor her head was engaged; the faculties of both were irritated, not satisfied or employed. She felt somewhat too sensitively the hollowness of the great world, and had a low opinion of human nature. In fact, she was a woman of the French memoirs,—one of those charming and *spirituelle* Aspasia's of the boudoir who interest us by their subtlety, tact, and grace, their exquisite tone of refinement, and are redeemed from the superficial and frivolous, partly by a consummate knowledge of the social system in which they move, and partly by a half-concealed and touching discontent of the trifles on which their talents and affections are wasted. These

are the women who, after a youth of false pleasure, often end by an old age of false devotion. They are a class peculiar to those ranks and countries in which shines and saddens that gay and unhappy thing,—*a woman without a home?*

Now, this was a specimen of life, this Valerie de Ventadour, that Maltravers had never yet contemplated; and Maltravers was perhaps equally new to the Frenchwoman. They were delighted with each other's society, although it so happened that they never agreed.

Madame de Ventadour rode on horseback, and Maltravers was one of her usual companions. And oh, the beautiful landscapes through which their daily excursions lay!

Maltravers was an admirable scholar. The stores of the immortal dead were as familiar to him as his own language. The poetry, the philosophy, the manner of thought and habits of life of the graceful Greek and the luxurious Roman were a part of knowledge that constituted a common and household portion of his own associations and peculiarities of thought. He had saturated his intellect with the Pactolus of old, and the grains of gold came down from the classic Tmolus with every tide. This knowledge of the dead, often so useless, has an inexpressible charm when it is applied to the places where the dead lived. We care nothing about the ancients on Highgate Hill; but at Baiæ, Pompeii, by the Virgilian Hades, the ancients are society with which we thirst to be familiar. To the animated and curious Frenchwoman what a cicerone was Ernest Maltravers! How eagerly she listened to accounts of a life more elegant than that of Paris; of a civilization which the world never can know again! So much the better; for it was rotten at the core, though most brilliant in the complexion. Those cold names and unsubstantial shadows which Madame de Ventadour had been accustomed to yawn over in skeleton histories, took from the eloquence of Maltravers the breath of life; they glowed and moved; they feasted and made love,—were wise and foolish, merry and sad, like living things. On the other hand, Maltravers learned a thousand new secrets of the existing and actual world from the lips of the accomplished and

observant Valerie. What a new step in the philosophy of life does a young man of genius make when he first compares his theories and experience with the intellect of a clever woman of the world! Perhaps it does not elevate him, but how it enlightens and refines! What numberless minute yet important mysteries in human character and practical wisdom does he drink unconsciously from the sparkling *persiflage* of such a companion! Our education is hardly ever complete without it.

"And so you think these stately Romans were not, after all, so dissimilar to ourselves?" said Valerie one day, as they looked over the same earth and ocean along which had roved the eyes of the voluptuous but august Lucullus.

"In the last days of their Republic, a *coup-d'œil* of their social state might convey to us a general notion of our own. Their system like ours,—a vast aristocracy, heaved and agitated, but kept ambitious and intellectual by the great democratic ocean which roared below and around it. An immense distinction between rich and poor,—a nobility sumptuous, wealthy, cultivated, yet scarcely elegant or refined; a people with mighty aspirations for more perfect liberty, but always liable, in a crisis, to be influenced and subdued by a deep-rooted veneration for the very aristocracy against which they struggled. A ready opening through all the walls of custom and privilege for every description of talent and ambition, but so strong and universal a respect for wealth that the finest spirit grew avaricious, griping, and corrupt, almost unconsciously; and the man who rose from the people did not scruple to enrich himself out of the abuses he affected to lament; and the man who would have died for his country could not help thrusting his hands into her pockets. Cassius, the stubborn and thoughtful patriot, with his heart of iron, had, you remember, an itching palm. Yet what a blow to all the hopes and dreams of a world was the overthrow of the free party after the death of Cæsar! What generations of free-men fell at Philippi! In England, perhaps, we may have ultimately the same struggle; in France, too (perhaps a larger stage, with far more inflammable actors), we already

perceive the same war of elements which shook Rome to her centre, which finally replaced the generous Julius with the hypocritical Augustus, which destroyed the colossal patricians to make way for the glittering dwarfs of a court, and cheated the people out of the substance with the shadow of liberty. How it may end in the modern world, who shall say? But while a nation has already a fair degree of constitutional freedom, I believe no struggle so perilous and awful as that between the aristocratic and the democratic principle. A people against a despot,—*that* contest requires no prophet; but the change from an aristocratic to a democratic commonwealth is indeed the wide, unbounded prospect upon which rest shadows, clouds, and darkness. If it fail,—for centuries is the dial-hand of Time put back; if it succeed —” Maltravers paused.

“And if it succeed?” said Valerie.

“Why, then, man will have colonized Utopia!” replied Maltravers.

“But at least, in modern Europe,” he continued, “there will be fair room for the experiment. For we have not that curse of slavery which, more than all else, vitiated every system of the ancients, and kept the rich and the poor alternately at war; and we have a Press, which is not only the safety-valve of the passions of every party, but the great note-book of the experiments of every hour,—the homely, the invaluable ledger of losses and of gains. No; the people who keep that tablet well, never can be bankrupt. And the society of those old Romans,—their daily passions, occupations, humours,—why, the satire of Horace is the glass of our own follies; we may fancy his easy pages written in the Chaussée d’Antin or Mayfair. But there was one thing that will ever keep the ancient world dissimilar from the modern.”

“And what is that?”

“The ancients knew not that delicacy in the affections which characterizes the descendants of the Goths,” said Maltravers, and his voice slightly trembled; “they gave up to the monopoly of the senses what ought to have had an equal share in the reason and the imagination. Their love was a

beautiful and wanton butterfly, but not the butterfly which is the emblem of the soul."

Valerie sighed. She looked timidly into the face of the young philosopher; but his eyes were averted.

"Perhaps," she said, after a short pause, "we pass our lives more happily without love than with it. And in our modern social system," she continued thoughtfully, and with profound truth, though it is scarcely the conclusion to which a woman often arrives, "I think we have pampered Love to too great a preponderance over the other excitements of life. As children, we are taught to dream of it; in youth, our books, our conversation, our plays, are filled with it. We are trained to consider it the essential of life; and yet, the moment we come to actual experience, the moment we indulge this inculcated and stimulated craving, nine times out of ten we find ourselves wretched and undone. Ah! believe me, Mr. Maltravers, this is not a world in which we should preach up too far the philosophy of Love."

"And does Madame de Ventadour speak from experience?" asked Maltravers, gazing earnestly upon the changing countenance of his companion.

"No; and I trust that I never may!" said Valerie, with great energy.

Ernest's lip curled slightly, for his pride was touched.

"I could give up many dreams of the future," said he, "to hear Madame de Ventadour revoke that sentiment."

"We have outridden our companions, Mr. Maltravers," said Valerie, coldly, and she reined in her horse. "Ah, Mr. Ferrers," she continued, as Lumley and the handsome German baron now joined her, "you are too gallant; I see you imply a delicate compliment to my horsemanship when you wish me to believe you cannot keep up with me: Mr. Maltravers is not so polite."

"Nay," returned Ferrers, who rarely threw away a compliment without a satisfactory return,— "nay, you and Maltravers appeared lost among the old Romans; and our friend the baron took that opportunity to tell me of all the ladies who adore him."

"Ah, Monsieur Ferrare, que vous êtes malin!" said Schomberg, looking very much confused.

"*Malin!* no; I spoke from no envy,—*I* never was adored, thank Heaven! What a bore it must be!"

"I congratulate you on the sympathy between yourself and Ferrers," whispered Maltravers to Valerie.

Valerie laughed; but during the rest of the excursion she remained thoughtful and absent, and for some days their rides were discontinued. Madame de Ventadour was not well.

CHAPTER III.

O LOVE! forsake me not;
Mine were a lone, dark lot,
Bereft of thee.

HEMANS: *Genius singing to Love.*

I FEAR that as yet Ernest Maltravers had gained little from Experience, except a few current coins of worldly wisdom (and not very valuable those!), while he had lost much of that nobler wealth with which youthful enthusiasm sets out on the journey of life. Experience is an open giver, but a stealthy thief. There is, however, this to be said in her favour, that we retain her gifts; and if ever we demand restitution in earnest, 'tis ten to one but what we recover her thefts. Maltravers had lived in lands where public opinion is neither strong in its influence, nor rigid in its canons; and that does not make a man better. Moreover, thrown headlong amidst the temptations that make the first ordeal of youth, with ardent passions and intellectual superiority, he had been led by the one into many errors, from the consequences of which the other had delivered him; the necessity of roughing it through the world—of resisting fraud to-day, and violence to-morrow—had hardened over the surface of his heart, though at bottom the springs were still fresh and

living. He had lost much of his chivalrous veneration for women, for he had seen them less often deceived than deceiving. Again, too, the last few years had been spent without any high aims or fixed pursuits. Maltravers had been living on the capital of his faculties and affections in a wasteful, speculating spirit. It is a bad thing for a clever and ardent man not to have from the onset some paramount object of life.

All this considered, we can scarcely wonder that Maltravers should have fallen into an involuntary system of pursuing his own amusements and pursuits, without much forethought of the harm or the good they were to do to others or himself. The moment we lose forethought, we lose sight of duty; and though it seems like a paradox, we can seldom be careless without being selfish.

In seeking the society of Madame de Ventadour, Maltravers obeyed but the mechanical impulse that leads the idler towards the companionship which most pleases his leisure. He was interested and excited; and Valerie's manners, which to-day flattered, and to-morrow piqued him, enlisted his vanity and pride on the side of his fancy. But although M. de Ventadour, a frivolous and profligate Frenchman, seemed utterly indifferent as to what his wife chose to do,—and in the society in which Valerie lived, almost every lady had her cavalier,—yet Maltravers would have started with incredulity or dismay had any one accused him of a systematic design on her affections. But he was living with the world, and the world affected him as it almost always does every one else. Still, he had at times in his heart the feeling that he was not fulfilling his proper destiny and duties; and when he stole from the brilliant resorts of an unworthy and heartless pleasure, he was ever and anon haunted by his old familiar aspirations for the Beautiful, the Virtuous, and the Great. However, hell is paved with good intentions; and so, in the mean while, Ernest Maltravers surrendered himself to the delicious presence of Valerie de Ventadour.

One evening Maltravers, Ferrers, the French minister, a pretty Italian, and the Princess di — made the whole party

collected at Madame de Ventadour's. The conversation fell upon one of the tales of scandal relative to English persons, so common on the Continent.

"Is it true, Monsieur," said the French minister, gravely, to Lumley, "that your countrymen are much more immoral than other people? It is very strange, but in every town I enter, there is always some story in which *les Anglais* are the heroes. I hear nothing of French scandal, nothing of Italian; *toujours les Anglais*."

"Because we are shocked at these things, and make a noise about them, while you take them quietly. Vice is our episode,—your epic."

"I suppose it is so," said the Frenchman, with affected seriousness. "If we cheat at play, or flirt with a fair lady, we do it with decorum, and our neighbours think it no business of theirs. But you treat every frailty you find in your countrymen as a public concern, to be discussed and talked over and exclaimed against and told to all the world."

"I like the system of scandal," said Madame de Ventadour, abruptly; "say what you will, the policy of fear keeps many of us virtuous. Sin might not be odious if we did not tremble at the consequence even of appearances."

"*Hein, hein!*" grunted M. de Ventadour, shuffling into the room. "How are you? How are you? Charmed to see you! Dull night; I suspect we shall have rain. *Hein, hein!* Aha, Monsieur Ferrers, *comment ça va-t-il?* Will you give me my revenge at *écarté*? I have my suspicions that I am in luck to-night. *Hein, hein!*"

"*Écarté!* Well, with pleasure," said Ferrers.

Ferrers played well.

The conversation ended in a moment. The little party gathered round the table,—all except Valerie and Maltravers. The chairs that were vacated left a kind of breach between them; but still they were next to each other, and they felt embarrassed, for they felt alone.

"Do you never play?" asked Madame de Ventadour, after a pause.

"I *have* played," said Maltravers. "and I know the temp-

tation; I dare not play now. I love the excitement, but I have been humbled at the debasement,—it is a moral drunkenness that is worse than the physical.”

“You speak warmly.”

“Because I feel keenly. I once won of a man I respected, who was poor. His agony was a dreadful lesson to me. I went home, and was terrified to think I had felt so much pleasure in the pain of another. I have never played since that night.”

“So young and so resolute!” said Valerie, with admiration in her voice and eyes; “you are a strange person. Others would have been cured by losing,—you were cured by winning. It is a fine thing to have principle at your age, Mr. Maltravers.”

“I fear it was rather pride than principle,” said Maltravers. “Error is sometimes sweet; but there is no anguish like an error of which we feel ashamed. I cannot submit to blush for myself.”

“Ah!” muttered Valerie, “this is the echo of my own heart!” She rose and went to the window. Maltravers paused a moment, and followed her. Perhaps he half thought there was an invitation in the movement.

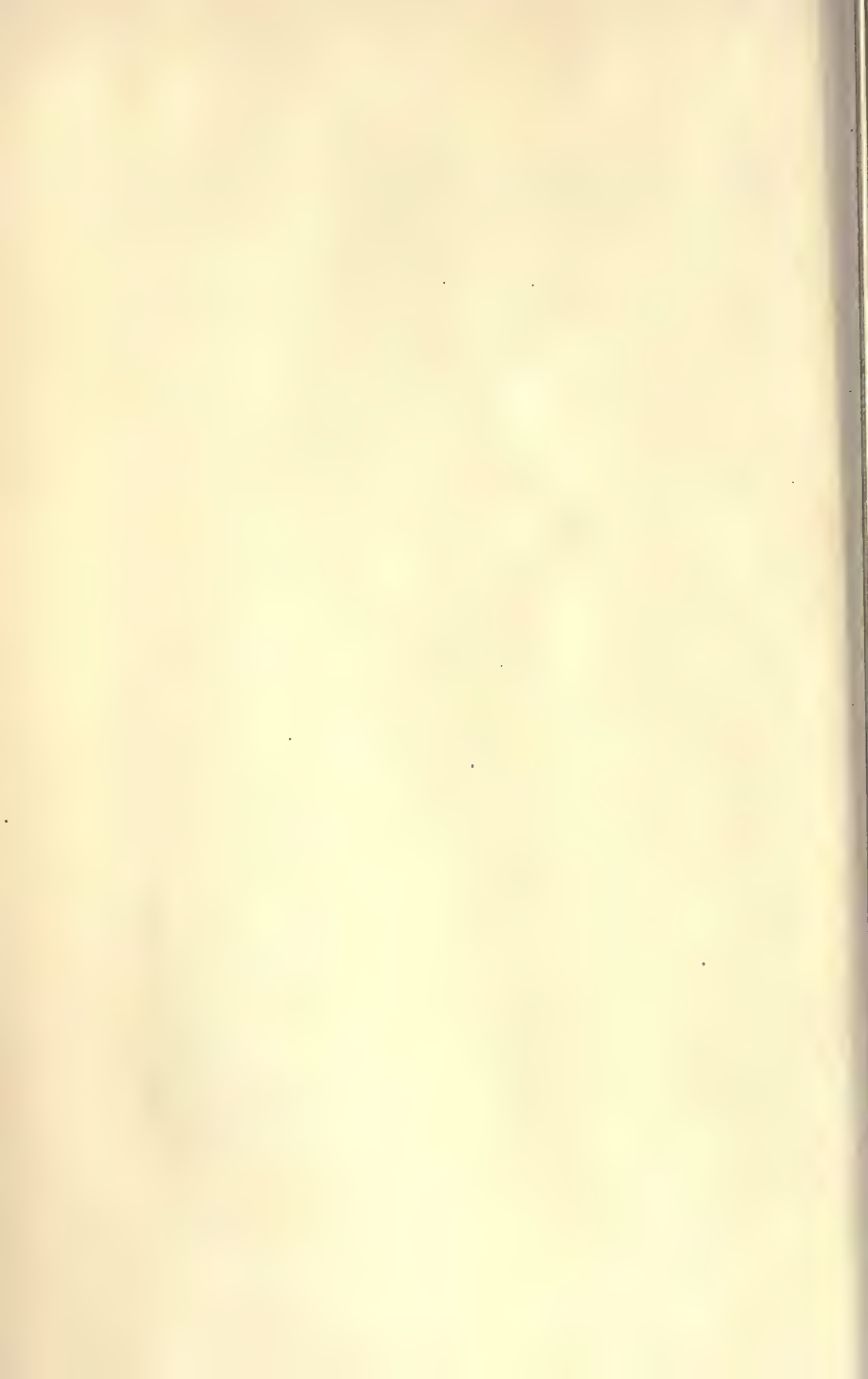
There lay before them the still street, with its feeble and unfrequent lights; beyond, a few stars, struggling through an atmosphere unusually clouded, brought the murmuring ocean partially into sight. Valerie leaned against the wall, and the draperies of the window veiled her from all the guests save Maltravers; and between her and himself was a large marble vase filled with flowers; and by that uncertain light Valerie’s brilliant cheek looked pale and soft and thoughtful. Maltravers never before felt so much in love with the beautiful Frenchwoman.

“Ah, Madame!” said he, softly, “there is one error, if it be so, that never can cost me shame.”

“Indeed!” said Valerie, with an unaffected start, for she was not aware he was so near her. As she spoke, she began plucking (it is a woman’s common trick) the flowers from the vase between her and Ernest. That small, delicate, almost



VALERIE AND MALTRAVERS AT THE WINDOW.



transparent hand! Maltravers gazed upon the hand, then on the countenance, then on the hand again. The scene swam before him, and involuntarily and as by an irresistible impulse, the next moment that hand was in his own.

"Pardon me, pardon me," said he, falteringly; "but that error is in the feelings that I know for you."

Valerie lifted on him her large and radiant eyes, and made no answer.

Maltravers went on. "Chide me, scorn me, hate me if you will,—Valerie, I love you."

Valerie drew away her hand, and still remained silent.

"Speak to me," said Ernest, leaning forward,— "one word, I implore you; speak to me!"

He paused,—still no reply; he listened breathlessly,—he heard her sob. Yes, that proud, that wise, that lofty woman of the world in that moment was as weak as the simplest girl that ever listened to a lover. But how different the feelings that made her weak; what soft and what stern emotions were blent together!

"Mr. Maltravers," she said, recovering her voice, though it sounded hollow, yet almost unnaturally firm and clear, "the die is cast, and I have lost forever the friend for whose happiness I cannot live, but for whose welfare I would have died; I should have foreseen this, but I was blind. No more, no more; see me to-morrow, and leave me now!"

"But, Valerie —"

"Ernest Maltravers," said she, laying her hand lightly on his own, "*there is no anguish like an error of which we feel ashamed!*"

Before he could reply to this citation from his own aphorism, Valerie had glided away, and was already seated at the card-table by the side of the Italian princess.

Maltravers also joined the group. He fixed his eyes on Madame de Ventadour, but her face was calm,—not a trace of emotion was discernible. Her voice, her smile, her charming and courtly manner, all were as when he first beheld her.

"These women, what hypocrites they are!" muttered Maltravers to himself; and his lip writhed into a sneer which

had of late often forced away the serene and gracious expression of his earlier years, ere he knew what it was to despise. But Maltravers mistook the woman he dared to scorn.

He soon withdrew from the palazzo and sought his hotel. There, while yet musing in his dressing-room, he was joined by Ferrers. The time had passed when Ferrers had exercised an influence over Maltravers; the boy had grown up to be the equal of the man in the exercise of that two-edged sword,—the reason. And Maltravers now felt, unalloyed, the calm consciousness of his superior genius. He could not confide to Ferrers what had passed between him and Valerie. Lumley was too *hard* for a confidant in matters where the heart was at all concerned. In fact, in high spirits, and in the midst of frivolous adventures, Ferrers was charming; but in sadness, or in the moments of deep feeling, Ferrers was one whom you would wish out of the way.

"You are sullen to-night, *mon cher*," said Lumley, yawning; "I suppose you want to go to bed. Some persons are so ill-bred, so selfish, they never think of their friends. Nobody asks me what I won at *écarté*. Don't be late to-morrow,—I hate breakfasting alone, and I am never later than a quarter before nine; I hate egotistical, ill-mannered people. Good-night!"

With this, Ferrers sought his own room; there, as he slowly undressed, he thus soliloquized: "I think I have put this man to all the use I can make of him. We don't pull well together any longer,—perhaps I myself am a little tired of this sort of life. That is not right. I shall grow ambitious by and by; but I think it a bad calculation not to make the most of youth. At four or five and thirty it will be time enough to consider what one ought to be at fifty."

CHAPTER IV.

Most dangerous

Is that temptation that does goad us on

To sin in loving virtue. — *Measure for Measure.*

"SEE her to-morrow,—that morrow is come!" thought Maltravers, as he rose the next day from a sleepless couch. Ere yet he had obeyed the impatient summons of Ferrers, who had thrice sent to say that *he* never kept people waiting, his servant entered with a packet from England that had just arrived by one of those rare couriers who sometimes honour that Naples which *might* be so lucrative a mart to English commerce if Neapolitan kings cared for trade, or English senators for "foreign politics." Letters from stewards and bankers were soon got through, and Maltravers reserved for the last an epistle from Cleveland. There was much in it that touched him home. After some dry details about the property to which Maltravers had now succeeded, and some trifling comments upon trifling remarks in Ernest's former letters, Cleveland went on thus:—

I confess, my dear Ernest, that I long to welcome you back to England. You have been abroad long enough to *see* other countries; do not stay long enough to prefer them to your own. You are at Naples, too,—I tremble for you. I know well that delicious, dreaming, holiday-life of Italy, so sweet to men of learning and imagination, so sweet, too, to youth, so sweet to pleasure! But, Ernest, do you not feel already how it enervates; how the luxurious *far niente* unfits us for grave exertion? Men may become too refined and too fastidious for useful purposes; and nowhere can they become so more rapidly than in Italy. My dear Ernest, I know you well; you are not made to sink down into a virtuosio, with a cabinet full of cameos and a head full of pictures, still less are you made to be an indolent *cicesbeo* to some fair Italian, with one passion and two ideas. And yet I have known men as clever as you whom that bewitching Italy has sunk into one or other of these insig-

nificant beings. Don't run away with the notion that you have plenty of time before you. You have no such thing. At your age, and with your fortune (I wish you were not so rich!), the holiday of one year becomes the custom of the next. In England, to be a useful or a distinguished man, you must labour. Now, labour itself is sweet, if we take to it early. We are a hard race, but we are a manly one; and our stage is the most exciting in Europe for an able and an honest ambition. Perhaps you will tell me you are not ambitious now. Very possibly; but ambitious you will be; and, believe me, there is no unhappier wretch than a man who is ambitious but disappointed, — who has the desire for fame, but has lost the power to achieve it; who longs for the goal, but will not and cannot put away his slippers to walk to it. What I most fear for you is one of these two evils, — an early marriage, or a fatal *liaison* with some married woman. The first evil is certainly the least; but for *you* it would still be a great one. With your sensitive romance, with your morbid cravings for the ideal, domestic happiness would soon grow trite and dull. You would demand new excitement, and become a restless and disgusted man. It is necessary for you to get rid of all the false fever of life before you settle down to everlasting ties. You do not yet know your own mind; you would choose your partner from some visionary caprice or momentary impulse, and not from the deep and accurate knowledge of those qualities which would most harmonize with your own character. People to live happily with each other must *fit in*, as it were, — the proud be mated with the meek, the irritable with the gentle, and so forth. No, my dear Maltravers, do not think of marriage yet a while; and if there is any danger of it, come over to me immediately. But if I warn you against a lawful tie, how much more against an illicit one! You are precisely at the age and of the disposition which render the temptation so strong and so deadly. With you it might not be the sin of an hour, but the bondage of a life. I know your chivalric honour, your tender heart; I know how faithful you would be to one who had sacrificed for you. But that fidelity, Maltravers, to what a life of wasted talent and energies would it not compel you! Putting aside for the moment (for that needs no comment) the question of the grand immorality, what so fatal to a bold and proud temper as to be at war with society at the first entrance into life! What so withering to manly aims and purposes as the giving into the keeping of a woman who has interest in your love and interest against your career, which might part you at once from her side, the control of your future destinies! I could say more; but I trust what I have said is superfluous, — if so, pray assure me of it. Depend upon this, Ernest Maltravers, that if you do not fulfil what nature intended for your fate,

you will be a morbid misanthrope or an indolent voluptuary, — wretched and listless in manhood, repining and joyless in old age. But if you do fulfil your fate, you must enter soon into your apprenticeship. Let me see you labour and aspire, — no matter what in, — what to. Work, work; that is all I ask of you!

I wish you could see your old country-house; it has a venerable and picturesque look, and during your minority they have let the ivy cover three sides of it. Montaigne might have lived there:

Adieu, dearest Ernest.

Your anxious and affectionate guardian,

FREDERICK CLEVELAND.

P. S. I am writing a book, — it shall last me ten years; it occupies me, but does not fatigue. Write a book yourself.

Maltravers had just finished this letter when Ferrers entered impatiently. "Will you ride out?" said he. "I have sent the breakfast away. I saw that breakfast was a vain hope to-day, — indeed, *my* appetite is gone."

"Pshaw!" said Maltravers.

"Pshaw! Humph! for my part I like well-bred people."

"I have had a letter from Cleveland."

"And what the deuce has that got to do with the chocolate?"

"Oh, Lumley, you are insufferable! You think of nothing but yourself; and self with you means nothing that is not animal."

"Why, yes, I believe I have some sense," replied Ferrers, complacently. "I know the philosophy of life. All unfledged bipeds are animals, I suppose. If Providence had made me graminivorous, I should have eaten grass; if ruminating, I should have chewed the cud; but as it has made me a carnivorous, culinary, and cachinnatory animal, I eat a cutlet, scold about the sauce, and laugh at you, — and this is what *you* call being selfish!"

It was late at noon when Maltravers found himself at the palazzo of Madame de Ventadour. He was surprised, but agreeably so, that he was admitted, for the first time, into that private sanctum which bears the hackneyed title of boudoir. But there was little enough of the fine lady's boudoir

in the simple morning-room of Madame de Ventadour. It was a lofty apartment, stored with books, and furnished, not without claim to grace, but with very small attention to luxury.

Valerie was not there, and Maltravers, left alone, after a hasty glance around the chamber leaned abstractedly against the wall, and forgot, alas! all the admonitions of Cleveland. In a few moments the door opened, and Valerie entered. She was unusually pale, and Maltravers thought her eyelids betrayed the traces of tears. He was touched, and his heart smote him.

"I have kept you waiting, I fear," said Valerie, motioning him to a seat at a little distance from that on which she placed herself; "but you will forgive me," she added, with a slight smile. Then, observing he was about to speak, she went on rapidly: "Hear me, Mr. Maltravers — before you speak, hear me! You uttered words last night that ought never to have been addressed to me. You professed to — love me."

"Professed!"

"Answer me," said Valerie, with abrupt energy, — "not as man to woman, but as one human creature to another. From the bottom of your heart, from the core of your conscience, I call on you to speak the honest and the simple truth. Do you love me as your heart, your genius, must be capable of loving?"

"I love you truly, passionately!" said Maltravers, surprised and confused, but still with enthusiasm in his musical voice and earnest eyes. Valerie gazed upon him as if she sought to penetrate into his soul. Maltravers went on. "Yes, Valerie, when we first met, you aroused a long dormant and delicious sentiment. But since then, what deep emotions has that sentiment called forth? Your graceful intellect, your lovely thoughts, wise, yet womanly, have completed the conquest your face and voice began. Valerie, I love you. And you — you, Valerie — ah! I do not deceive myself — you also —"

"Love!" interrupted Valerie, deeply blushing, but in a

calm voice. "Ernest Maltravers, I do not deny it; honestly and frankly I confess the fault. I have examined my heart during the whole of the last sleepless night, and I confess that I love you. Now, then, understand me,—we meet no more."

"What!" said Maltravers, falling involuntarily at her feet, and seeking to detain her hand, which he seized. "What! now, when you have given life a new charm, will you as suddenly blast it? No, Valerie, no; I will not listen to you."

Madame de Ventadour rose and said, with a cold dignity: "Hear me calmly, or I quit the room, and all I would now say rests forever unspoken."

Maltravers rose also, folded his arms haughtily, bit his lip, and stood erect, and confronting Valerie rather in the attitude of an accuser than a suppliant.

"Madame," said he, gravely, "I will offend no more; I will trust to your manner, since I may not believe your words."

"You are cruel," said Valerie, smiling mournfully; "but so are all men. Now let me make myself understood. I was betrothed to M. de Ventadour in my childhood. I did not see him till a month before we married. I had no choice; French girls have none. We were wed. I had formed no other attachment. I was proud and vain; wealth, ambition, and social rank for a time satisfied my faculties and my heart. At length I grew restless and unhappy. I felt that something of life was wanting. M. de Ventadour's sister was the first to recommend me to the common resource of our sex, at least, in France,—a lover. I was shocked and startled, for I belong to a family in which women are chaste and men brave. I began, however, to look around me and examine the truth of the philosophy of vice. I found that no woman who loved honestly and deeply an illicit lover was happy. I found, too, the hideous profundity of Rochefoucauld's maxim that a woman—I speak of French women—may live without a lover; but, a lover once admitted, she never goes through life with *only* one. She is deserted; she cannot bear the anguish and the solitude; she fills up the void with a second idol. For her there is no longer a fall from virtue,—it is a gliding

and involuntary descent from sin to sin, till old age comes on and leaves her without love and without respect. I reasoned calmly, for my passions did not blind my reason. I could not love the egotists around me. I resolved upon my career; and now, in temptation, I will adhere to it. Virtue is my lover, my pride, my comfort, my life of life. Do you love me, and will you rob me of this treasure? I saw you, and for the first time I felt a vague and intoxicating interest in another; but I did not dream of danger. As our acquaintance advanced, I formed to myself a romantic and delightful vision. I would be your firmest, your truest friend; your confidant, your adviser,—perhaps, in some epochs of life, your inspiration and your guide. I repeat that I foresaw no danger in your society. I felt myself a nobler and a better being. I felt more benevolent, more tolerant, more exalted. I saw life through the medium of purifying admiration for a gifted nature and a profound and generous soul. I fancied we might be ever thus, each to each,—one strengthened, assured, supported, by the other. Nay, I even contemplated with pleasure the prospect of your future marriage with another,—of loving your wife; of contributing, with her, to your happiness: my imagination made me forget that we are made of clay. Suddenly all these visions were dispelled, the fairy palace was overthrown, and I found myself awake and on the brink of the abyss. You loved me, and in the moment of that fatal confession the mask dropped from my soul, and I felt that you had become too dear to me. Be silent still, I implore you. I do not tell you of the emotions, of the struggles, through which I have passed the last few hours,—the crisis of a life. I tell you only of the resolution I formed. I thought it due to you, nor unworthy to myself, to speak the truth. Perhaps it might be more womanly to conceal it; but my heart has something masculine in its nature. I have a great faith in your nobleness. I believe you can sympathize with whatever is best in human weakness. I tell you that I love you; I throw myself upon your generosity. I beseech you to assist my own sense of right, to think well of me, to honour me, and to leave me!”

During the last part of this strange and frank avowal, Valerie's voice had grown inexpressibly touching; her tenderness forced itself into her manner; and when she ceased, her lip quivered; her tears, repressed by a violent effort, trembled in her eyes, her hands were clasped, her attitude was that of humility, not pride.

Maltravers stood perfectly spell-bound. At length he advanced, dropped on one knee, kissed her hand with an aspect and air of reverential homage, and turned to quit the room in silence; for he would not dare to trust himself to speak.

Valerie gazed at him in anxious alarm. "Oh, no, no!" she exclaimed, "do not leave me yet; this is our last meeting, — our last. Tell me at least that you understand me, that you see, if I am no weak fool, I am also no heartless coquette; tell me that you see I am not as hard as I have seemed; that I have not knowingly trifled with your happiness; that even now I am not selfish. Your love — I ask it no more; but your esteem, your good opinion. Oh, speak, speak, I implore you!"

"Valerie," said Maltravers, "if I was silent, it was because my heart was too full for words. You have raised all womanhood in my eyes. I did love you, — I now venerate and adore. Your noble frankness, so unlike the irresolute frailty, the miserable wiles of your sex, has touched a chord in my heart that has been mute for years. I leave you to think better of human nature. Oh!" he continued, "hasten to forget all of me that can cost you a pang. Let me still, in absence and in sadness, think that I retain in your friendship — let it be friendship only — the inspiration, the guide of which you spoke; and if, hereafter, men shall name me with praise and honour, feel, Valerie, feel that I have comforted myself for the loss of your love by becoming worthy of your confidence, your esteem. Oh that we had met earlier, when no barrier was between us!"

"Go, go, *now*," faltered Valerie, almost choked with her emotions; "may Heaven bless you! Go!"

Maltravers muttered a few inaudible and incoherent words, and quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER V.

THE men of sense, those idols of the shallow, are very inferior to the men of Passions. It is the strong passions which, rescuing us from sloth, can alone impart to us that continuous and earnest attention necessary to great intellectual efforts. — HELVETIUS.

WHEN Ferrers returned that day from his customary ride, he was surprised to see the lobbies and hall of the apartment which he occupied in common with Maltravers, littered with bags and *malles*, boxes and books, and Ernest's Swiss valet directing porters and waiters in a mosaic of French, English, and Italian.

"Well!" said Lumley, "and what is all this?"

"Il signore va partir, sare, ah, mon Dieu! — tout of a sudden."

"O — h! and where is he now?"

"In his room, sare."

Over the chaos strode Ferrers, and opening the door of his friend's dressing-room without ceremony, he saw Maltravers buried in a *fauteuil*, with his hands drooping on his knees, his head bent over his breast, and his whole attitude expressive of dejection and exhaustion.

"What is the matter, my dear Ernest? You have not killed a man in a duel?"

"No."

"What then? Why are you going away, and whither?"

"No matter; leave me in peace."

"Friendly!" said Ferrers; "very friendly! And what is to become of me, — what companion am I to have in this cursed resort of antiquarians and lazzaroni? You have no feeling, Mr. Maltravers!"

"Will you come with me, then?" said Maltravers, in vain endeavouring to rouse himself.

"But where are you going?"

"Anywhere,—to Paris, to London."

"No; I have arranged my plans for the summer. I am not so rich as some people. I hate change; it is so expensive."

"But, my dear fellow —"

"Is this fair dealing with me?" continued Lumley, who, for once in his life, was really angry. "If I were an old coat you had worn for five years you could not throw me off with more *nonchalance*."

"Ferrers, forgive me. My honour is concerned. I must leave this place. I trust you will remain my guest here, though in the absence of your host. You know that I have engaged the apartments for the next three months."

"Humph!" said Ferrers, "as that is the case I may as well stay here. But why so secret? Have you seduced Madame de Ventadour, or has her wise husband his suspicions? *Hein, hein!*"

Maltravers smothered his disgust at this coarseness; and perhaps there is no greater trial of temper than in a *he* friend's gross remarks upon the connections of the heart.

"Ferrers," said he, "if you care for me, breathe not a word disrespectful to Madame de Ventadour; she is an angel!"

"But why leave Naples?"

"Trouble me no more."

"Good day, sir," said Ferrers, highly offended, and he stalked out of the chamber; nor did Ernest see him again before his departure.

It was late that evening when Maltravers found himself alone in his carriage, pursuing by starlight the ancient and melancholy road to Mola di Gaeta.

His solitude was a luxury to Maltravers; he felt an inexpressible sense of relief to be freed from Ferrers. The hard sense, the unpliant, though humorous, imperiousness, the animal sensuality of his companion would have been a torture to him in his present state of mind.

The next morning, when he rose, the orange-blossoms of Mola di Gaeta were sweet beneath the window of the inn where he rested. It was now the early spring, and the freshness of the odour, the breathing health of earth and air,

it is impossible to describe. Italy itself boasts few spots more lovely than that same Mola di Gaeta, nor does that halcyon sea wear, even at Naples or Sorrento, a more bland and enchanting smile.

So, after a hasty and scarcely tasted breakfast, Maltravers strolled through the orange groves and gained the beach; and there, stretched at idle length by the murmuring waves, he resigned himself to thought, and endeavoured, for the first time since his parting with Valerie, to collect and examine the state of his mind and feelings. Maltravers, to his own surprise, did not find himself so unhappy as he had expected. On the contrary, a soft and almost delicious sentiment, which he could not well define, floated over all his memories of the beautiful Frenchwoman. Perhaps the secret was that while his pride was not mortified, his conscience was not galled; perhaps, also, he had not loved Valerie so deeply as he had imagined. The confession and the separation had happily come before her presence had grown *the want of a life*. As it was, he felt as if, by some holy and mystic sacrifice, he had been made reconciled to himself and mankind. He woke to a juster and higher appreciation of human nature, and of woman's nature in especial. He had found honesty and truth where he might least have expected it,—in a woman of a court, in a woman surrounded by vicious and frivolous circles; in a woman who had nothing in the opinion of her friends, her country, her own husband, the social system in which she moved, to keep her from the concessions of frailty; in a woman of the world, a woman of Paris! Yes, it was his very disappointment that drove away the fogs and vapours that, arising from the marshes of the great world, had gradually settled round his soul. Valerie de Ventadour had taught him not to despise her sex, not to judge by appearances, not to sicken of a low and a hypocritical world. He looked in his heart for the love of Valerie, and he found there the love of virtue. Thus, as he turned his eyes inward, did he gradually awaken to a sense of the true impressions engraved there. And he felt the bitterest drop of the deep fountains was not sorrow for himself, but for her. What pangs must that high

spirit have endured ere it could have submitted to the avowal it had made! Yet, even in this affliction, he found at last a solace. A mind so strong could support and heal the weakness of the heart. He felt that Valerie de Ventadour was not a woman to pine away in the unresisted indulgence of morbid and unholy emotions. He could not flatter himself that she would not seek to eradicate a love she repented; and he sighed with a natural selfishness when he owned also that sooner or later she would succeed. "But be it so," said he, half aloud, — "I will prepare my heart to rejoice when I learn that she remembers me only as a friend. Next to the bliss of her love is the pride of her esteem."

Such was the sentiment with which his reveries closed; and with every league that bore him farther from the South, the sentiment grew strengthened and confirmed.

Ernest Maltravers felt that there is in the affections themselves so much to purify and exalt that even an erring love, conceived without a cold design, and (when its nature is fairly understood) wrestled against with a noble spirit, leaves the heart more tolerant and tender, and the mind more settled and enlarged. The philosophy limited to the reason puts into motion the automata of the closet; but to those who have the world for a stage, and who find their hearts are the great actors, experience and wisdom must be wrought from the Philosophy of the Passions.

BOOK III.

Ὅ 'πόλλων οὐ παντὶ φαίνεται, . . .

Ὅς μιν ἴδῃ, μέγας οὗτος.

CALLIMACHUS : *Ex Hymno in Apollinar.*

"Not to all men Apollo shows himself ;
Who sees him, — *he* is great !"

CHAPTER I.

HERE will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears : soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

SHAKESPEARE.

BOAT SONG ON THE LAKE OF COMO.

I.

THE Beautiful Clime ! the Clime of Love !
Thou beautiful Italy !
Like a mother's eyes, the earnest skies
Ever have smiles for thee !
Not a flower that blows, not a beam that glows,
But what is in love with thee !

II.

The beautiful lake, the Larian lake !¹
Soft lake like a silver sea,
The Huntress Queen, with her nymphs of sheen,
Never had bath like thee.
See, the Lady of night and her maids of light
Even now are mid-deep in thee !

¹ The ancient name for Como.

III.

Beautiful child of the lonely hills,
 Ever blest may thy slumbers be !
 No mourner should tread by thy dreamy bed,
 No life bring a care to thee, —
 Nay, soft to thy bed let the mourner tread,
 And life be a dream like thee !

Such, though uttered in the soft Italian tongue, and now imperfectly translated, — such were the notes that floated one lovely evening in summer along the lake of Como. The boat, from which came the song, drifted gently down the sparkling waters towards the mossy banks of a lawn whence on a little eminence gleamed the white walls of a villa backed by vineyards. On that lawn stood a young and handsome woman leaning on the arm of her husband and listening to the song. But her delight was soon deepened into one of more personal interest as the boatmen, nearing the banks, changed their measure, and she felt that the minstrelsy was in honour of herself.

SERENADE TO THE SONGSTRESS.

I.

CHORUS.

Softly, oh ! soft, let us rest on the oar,
 And vex not a billow that sighs to the shore ;
 For sacred the spot where the starry waves meet
 With the beach, where the breath of the citron is sweet.
 There's a spell on the waves that now waft us along
 To the last of our Muses, — the Spirit of Song.

RECITATIVE.

The Eagle of old renown,
 And the Lombard's iron crown
 And Milan's mighty name are ours no more ;
 But by this glassy water,
 Harmonia's youngest daughter
 Still from the lightning saves one laurel to our shore.

II.

CHORUS.

They heard thee, Teresa, the Teuton, the Gaul,
 Who have raised the rude thrones of the North on our fall, —
 They heard thee, and bowed to the might of thy song.
 Like love went thy steps o'er the hearts of the strong,
 As the moon to the air, as the soul to the clay,
 To the void of this earth was the breath of thy lay.

RECITATIVE.

Honour for aye to her,
 The bright interpreter
 Of Art's great mysteries to the enchanted throng!
 While tyrants heard thy strains,
 Sad Rome forgot her chains;
 The world the sword had lost was conquered back by song!

"Thou repentest, my Teresa, that thou hast renounced thy dazzling career for a dull home and a husband old enough to be thy father," said the husband to the wife, with a smile that spoke confidence in the answer.

"Ah, no! even its homage would have no music to me if thou didst not hear it."

She was a celebrated personage in Italy,—the Signora Cesarini, now Madame de Montaigne. Her earlier youth had been spent upon the stage, and her promise of vocal excellence had been most brilliant. But after a brief though splendid career she married a French gentleman of good birth and fortune, retired from the stage, and spent her life alternately in the gay saloons of Paris and upon the banks of the dreamy Como, on which her husband had purchased a small but beautiful villa. She still, however, exercised in private her fascinating art; to which—for she was a woman of singular accomplishment and talent—she added the gift of the *improvisatrice*. She had just returned for the summer to this lovely retreat, and a party of enthusiastic youths from Milan had sought the lake of Como to welcome her arrival with the suitable homage of song and music. It is a charming relic, that custom of the brighter days of Italy; and I

myself have listened, on the still waters of the same lake, to a similar greeting to a greater genius,—the queen-like and unrivalled Pasta, the Semiramis of Song! And while my boat paused, and I caught something of the enthusiasm of the serenaders, the boatman touched me, and pointing to a part of the lake on which the setting sun shed its rosiest smile, he said, “There, Signor, was drowned one of your countrymen,—‘bellissimo uomo! che fu bello!’” Yes, there, in the pride of his promising youth, of his noble and almost godlike beauty, before the very windows, the very eyes, of his bride, the waves, without a frown, had swept over the idol of many hearts,—the graceful and gallant Locke.¹ And above his grave was the voluptuous sky, and over it floated the triumphant music. It was as the moral of the Roman poets,—calling the living to a holiday over the oblivion of the dead.

As the boat now touched the bank, Madame de Montaigne accosted the musicians, thanked them with a sweet and unaffected earnestness for the compliment so delicately offered, and invited them ashore. The Milanese, who were six in number, accepted the invitation, and moored their boat to the jutting shore. It was then that M. de Montaigne pointed out to the notice of his wife a boat, that had lingered under the shadow of a bank, tenanted by a young man, who had seemed to listen with rapt attention to the music, and who had once joined in the chorus (as it was twice repeated) with a voice so exquisitely attuned and so rich in its deep power that it had awakened the admiration even of the serenaders themselves.

“Does not that gentleman belong to your party?” De Montaigne asked of the Milanese.

¹ Captain William Locke, of the Life Guards (the only son of the accomplished Mr Locke, of Norbury Park), distinguished by a character the most amiable, and by a personal beauty that certainly equalled, perhaps surpassed, the highest masterpiece of Grecian sculpture. He was returning in a boat from the town of Como to his villa, on the banks of the lake, when the boat was upset by one of the mysterious under-currents to which the lake is dangerously subjected, and he was drowned in sight of his bride, who was watching his return from the terrace, or balcony, of their home.

"No, Signor, we know him not," was the answer; "his boat came unawares upon us as we were singing."

While this question and answer were going on, the young man had quitted his station, and his oars cut the glassy surface of the lake just before the place where De Montaigne stood. With the courtesy of his country, the Frenchman lifted his hat, and by his gesture arrested the eye and oar of the solitary rower. "Will you honour us," he said, "by joining our little party?"

"It is a pleasure I covet too much to refuse," replied the boatman, with a slight foreign accent; and in another moment he was on shore. He was one of remarkable appearance. His long hair floated with a careless grace over a brow more calm and thoughtful than became his years; his manner was unusually quiet and self-collected, and not without a certain stateliness, rendered more striking by the height of his stature, a lordly contour of feature, and a serene but settled expression of melancholy in his eyes and smile. "You will easily believe," said he, "that, cold as my countrymen are esteemed (for you must have discovered already that I am an Englishman), I could not but share in the enthusiasm of those about me when loitering near the very ground sacred to the inspiration. For the rest, I am residing for the present in yonder villa, opposite to your own; my name is Maltravers; and I am enchanted to think that I am no longer a personal stranger to one whose fame has already reached me." Madame de Montaigne was flattered by something in the manner and tone of the Englishman, which said a great deal more than his words; and in a few minutes, beneath the influence of the happy Continental ease, the whole party seemed as if they had known each other for years. Wines and fruits and other simple and unpretending refreshments were brought out and arranged on a rude table upon the grass, round which the guests seated themselves with their host and hostess, and the clear moon shone over them, and the lake slept below in silver. It was a scene for a Boccaccio or a Claude.

The conversation naturally fell upon music; it is almost the only thing which Italians in general can be said to know,

—and even that knowledge comes to them, like Dogberry's reading and writing, by nature,—for of music as an *art* the unprofessional amateurs know but little. As vain and arrogant of the last wreck of their national genius as the Romans of old were of the empire of all arts and arms, they look upon the harmonies of other lands as barbarous; nor can they appreciate or understand appreciation of the mighty German music, which is the proper minstrelsy of a nation of *men*,—a music of philosophy, of heroism, of the intellect and the imagination, beside which the strains of modern Italy are indeed effeminate, fantastic, and artificially feeble. Rossini is the Canova of music, with much of the pretty, with nothing of the grand.

The little party talked, however, of music with an animation and gusto that charmed the melancholy Maltravers, who for weeks had known no companion save his own thoughts, and with whom, at all times, enthusiasm for any art found a ready sympathy. He listened attentively, but said little; and from time to time, whenever the conversation flagged, amused himself by examining his companions. The six Milanese had nothing remarkable in their countenances or in their talk; they possessed the characteristic energy and volubility of their countrymen, with something of the masculine dignity which distinguishes the Lombard from the Southern, and a little of the French polish which the inhabitants of Milan seldom fail to contract. Their rank was evidently that of the middle class; for Milan has a middle class, and one which promises great results hereafter. But they were no ways distinguished from a thousand other Milanese whom Maltravers had met with in the walks and *cafés* of their noble city. The host was somewhat more interesting. He was a tall, handsome man, of about eight and forty, with a high forehead, and features strongly impressed with the sober character of thought. He had but little of the French vivacity in his manner; and without looking at his countenance, you would still have felt insensibly that he was the eldest of the party. His wife was at least twenty years younger than himself, mirthful and playful as a child, but with a certain

feminine and fascinating softness in her unrestrained gestures and sparkling gayety, which seemed to subdue her natural joyousness into the form and method of conventional elegance. Dark hair carelessly arranged, an open forehead, large, black, laughing eyes, a small, straight nose, a complexion just relieved from the olive by an evanescent, yet perpetually recurring blush, a round, dimpled cheek, an exquisitely-shaped mouth, with small pearly teeth, and a light and delicate figure a little below the ordinary standard, completed the picture of Madame de Montaigne.

"Well," said Signor Tirabaloschi, the most loquacious and sentimental of the guests, filling his glass, "these are hours to think of for the rest of life. But we cannot hope the Signora will long remember what *we* never can forget. 'Paris,' says the French proverb, 'est le paradis des femmes;' and in Paradise, I take it for granted, we recollect very little of what happened on earth."

"Oh!" said Madame de Montaigne, with a pretty, musical laugh, "in Paris it is the rage to despise the frivolous life of cities, and to affect *des sentiments romanesques*. This is precisely the scene which our fine ladies and fine writers would die to talk of and to describe. Is it not so, *mon ami*?" and she turned affectionately to De Montaigne.

"True," replied he; "but you are not worthy of such a scene,—you laugh at sentiment and romance."

"Only at French sentiment and the romance of the Chaussée d'Antin. You English," she continued, shaking her head at Maltravers, "have spoiled and corrupted us; we are not content to imitate you, we must excel you,—we out-horror horror, and rush from the extravagant into the frantic!"

"The ferment of the new school is perhaps better than the stagnation of the old," said Maltravers. "Yet even you," addressing himself to the Italians, "who first in Petrarch, in Tasso, and in Ariosto set to Europe the example of the Sentimental and the Romantic; who built among the very ruins of the classic school, amidst its Corinthian columns and sweeping arches, the spires and battlements of the Gothic,—even you are deserting your old models and guiding literature into

newer and wilder paths. 'Tis the way of the world: eternal progress is eternal change."

"Very possibly," said Signor Tirabaloschi, who understood nothing of what was said. "Nay, it is extremely profound; on reflection, it is beautiful—superb! you English are so—so; in short, it is admirable. Ugo Foscolo is a great genius, so is Monti; and as for Rossini, you know his last opera,—*cosa stupenda!*"

Madame de Montaigne glanced at Maltravers, clapped her little hands, and laughed outright. Maltravers caught the contagion, and laughed also. But he hastened to repair the pedantic error he had committed of talking over the heads of the company. He took up the guitar, which, among their musical instruments, the serenaders had brought, and after touching its chords for a few moments, said: "After all, Madame, in your society, and with this moonlit lake before us, we feel as if music were our best medium of conversation. Let us prevail upon these gentlemen to delight us once more."

"You forestall what I was going to ask," said the ex-singer; and Maltravers offered the guitar to Tirabaloschi, who was, in fact, dying to exhibit his powers again. He took the instrument with a slight grimace of modesty, and then saying to Madame de Montaigne, "There is a song composed by a young friend of mine which is much admired by the ladies, though to me it seems a little too sentimental," sang the following stanzas (as good singers are wont to do) with as much feeling as if he could understand them:—

NIGHT AND LOVE.

When the stars are in the quiet skies,
Then most I pine for thee;
Bend on me, then, thy tender eyes,
As stars look on the sea!

For thoughts, like waves that glide by night,
Are stillest where they shine,
Mine earthly love lies hushed in light
Beneath the heaven of thine.

There is an hour when angels keep
 Familiar watch on men,
 When coarser souls are wrapped in sleep, —
 Sweet spirit, meet me then !

There is an hour when holy dreams
 Through slumber fairest glide ;
 And in that mystic hour it seems
 Thou shouldst be by my side.

The thoughts of thee too sacred are
 For daylight's common beam, —
 I can but know thee as my star,
 My angel, and my dream !

And now, the example set and the praises of the fair hostess exciting general emulation, the guitar circled from hand to hand, and each of the Italians performed his part; you might have fancied yourself at one of the old Greek feasts, with the lyre and the myrtle-branch going the round.

But both the Italians and the Englishman felt the entertainment would be incomplete without hearing the celebrated vocalist and *improvvisatrice* who presided over the little banquet; and Madame de Montaigne, with a woman's tact, divined the general wish, and anticipated the request that was sure to be made. She took the guitar from the last singer, and turning to Maltravers, said, "You have heard, of course, some of our more eminent *improvvisatori*, and therefore if I ask you for a subject, it will only be to prove to you that the talent is not general amongst the Italians."

"Ah!" said Maltravers, "I have heard, indeed, some ugly old gentlemen with immense whiskers, and gestures of the most alarming ferocity, pour out their vehement impromptus; but I have never yet listened to a young and a handsome lady. I shall only believe the inspiration when I hear it direct from the Muse."

"Well, I will do my best to deserve your compliments; you must give me the theme."

Maltravers paused a moment, and suggested the Influence of Praise on Genius.

The *improvvisatrice* nodded assent, and after a short pre-

lude broke forth into a wild and varied strain of verse, in a voice so exquisitely sweet, with a taste so accurate, and a feeling so deep, that the poetry sounded to the enchanted listeners like the language that Armida might have uttered. Yet the verses themselves, like all extemporaneous effusions, were of a nature both to pass from the memory and to defy transcription.

When Madame de Montaigne's song ceased, no rapturous plaudits followed,—the Italians were too much affected by the science, Maltravers by the feeling, for the coarseness of ready praise; and ere that delighted silence which made the first impulse was broken, a new-comer, descending from the groves that clothed the ascent behind the house, was in the midst of the party.

"Ah, my dear brother," cried Madame de Montaigne, starting up, and hanging fondly on the arm of the stranger, "why have you lingered so long in the wood,—you, so delicate? And how are you? How pale you seem!"

"It is but the reflection of the moonlight, Teresa," said the intruder; "I feel well." So saying, he scowled on the merry party, and turned as if to slink away.

"No, no," whispered Teresa; "you must stay a moment and be presented to my guests. There is an Englishman here whom you will like, who will *interest* you." With that she almost dragged him forward, and introduced him to her guests.

Signor Cesarini returned their salutations with a mixture of bashfulness and *hauteur*, half-awkward and half-graceful, and muttering some inaudible greeting, sank into a seat and appeared instantly lost in revery. Maltravers gazed upon him, and was pleased with his aspect, which, if not handsome, was strange and peculiar. He was extremely slight and thin, his cheeks hollow and colourless, with a profusion of black silken ringlets that almost descended to his shoulders. His eyes, deeply sunk into his head, were large and intensely brilliant; and a thin mustache, curling downwards, gave an additional austerity to his mouth, which was closed with gloomy and half-sarcastic firmness. He was not dressed as

people dress in general, but wore a frock of dark camlet, with a large shirt-collar turned down, and a narrow slip of black silk twisted rather than tied round his throat; his nether garments fitted tight to his limbs, and a pair of half-hessians completed his costume. It was evident that the young man (and he was very young,—perhaps about nineteen or twenty) indulged that coxcombry of the Picturesque which is the sign of a vainer mind than is the commoner coxcombry of the *Mode*.

It is astonishing how frequently it happens that the introduction of a single intruder upon a social party is sufficient to destroy all the familiar harmony that existed there before. We see it even when the intruder is agreeable and communicative; but in the present instance a ghost could scarcely have been a more unwelcoming or unwelcome visitor. The presence of this shy, speechless, supercilious-looking man threw a damp over the whole group. The gay Tirabaloschi immediately discovered that it was time to depart: it had not struck any one before, but it certainly *was* late. The Italians began to bustle about, to collect their music, to make fine speeches and fine professions, to bow and to smile, to scramble into their boat, and to push off towards the inn at Como, where they had engaged their quarters for the night. As the boat glided away, and while two of them were employed at the oar, the remaining four took up their instruments and sang a parting glee. It was quite midnight; the hush of all things around had grown more intense and profound; there was a wonderful might of silence in the shining air and amidst the shadows thrown by the near banks and the distant hills over the water; so that as the music chiming in with the oars grew fainter and fainter, it is impossible to describe the thrilling and magical effect it produced.

The party ashore did not speak; there was a moisture—a grateful one—in the bright eyes of Teresa as she leaned upon the manly form of De Montaigne, for whom her attachment was perhaps yet more deep and pure for the difference of their ages. A girl who once loves a man, not indeed old, but much older than herself, loves him with such a *looking up* and veneration love! Maltravers stood a little apart from

the couple, on the edge of the shelving bank, with folded arms and thoughtful countenance. "How is it," said he, unconscious that he was speaking half aloud, "that the commonest beings of the world should be able to give us a pleasure so unworldly? What a contrast between those musicians and this music! At this distance their forms are dimly seen; one might almost fancy the creators of those sweet sounds to be of another mould from us. Perhaps even thus the poetry of the Past rings on our ears,—the deeper and the diviner because removed from the clay which made the poets. O Art, Art, how dost thou beautify and exalt us! What is Nature without thee?"

"You are a poet, Signor," said a soft, clear voice beside the soliloquist; and Maltravers started to find that he had had, unknowingly, a listener in the young Cesarini.

"No," said Maltravers; "I cull the flowers,—I do not cultivate the soil."

"And why not?" said Cesarini, with abrupt energy. "You are an Englishman; *you* have a public; you have a country; you have a living stage, a breathing audience,—we Italians have nothing but the dead."

As he looked on the young man, Maltravers was surprised to see the sudden animation which glowed upon his pale features.

"You asked me a question I would fain put to you," said the Englishman, after a pause. "*You*, methinks, are a poet?"

"I have fancied that I might be one. But poetry with us is a bird in the wilderness,—it sings from an impulse; the song dies without a listener. Oh that I belonged to a *living* country,—France, England, Germany, America,—and not to the corruption of a dead giantess!—for such is now the land of the ancient lyre."

"Let us meet again, and soon," said Maltravers, holding out his hand.

Cesarini hesitated a moment, and then accepted and returned the proffered salutation. Reserved as he was, something in Maltravers attracted him,—and, indeed, there was

that in Ernest which fascinated most of those unhappy eccentrics who do not move in the common orbit of the world.

In a few moments more the Englishman had said farewell to the owner of the villa, and his light boat skimmed rapidly over the tide.

"What do you think of the *Inglese*?" said Madame de Montaigne to her husband as they turned towards the house. (They said not a word about the Milanese.)

"He has a noble bearing for one so young," said the Frenchman, "and seems to have seen the world, and both to have profited and to have suffered by it."

"He will prove an acquisition to our society here," returned Teresa,— "he interests me. And you, Castruccio?" turning to seek for her brother; but Cesarini had already, with his usual noiseless step, disappeared within the house.

"Alas, my poor brother!" she replied, "I cannot comprehend him. What does he desire?"

"Fame!" replied De Montaigne, calmly. "It is a vain shadow,—no wonder that he disquiets himself in vain."

CHAPTER II.

ALAS! what boots it with incessant care
To strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?

MILTON: *Lycidas*.

THERE is nothing more salutary to active men than occasional intervals of repose,—when we look within, instead of without, and examine almost *insensibly* (for I hold strict and conscious self-scrutiny a thing much rarer than we suspect) what we have done, what we are capable of doing. It is settling, as it were, a debtor and creditor account with the past

before we plunge into new speculations. Such an interval of repose did Maltravers now enjoy. In utter solitude, so far as familiar companionship is concerned, he had for several weeks been making himself acquainted with his own character and mind. He read and thought much, but without any exact or defined object. I think it is Montaigne who says somewhere: "People talk about thinking; but for my part, I never think, except when I sit down to write." I believe this is not a very common case, for people who don't write, think as well as people who do. But connected, severe, well-developed thought, in contradistinction to vague meditation, must be connected with some tangible plan or object; and therefore we must be either writing men or acting men, if we desire to test the logic and unfold into symmetrical design the fused colours of our reasoning faculty. Maltravers did not yet feel this, but he was sensible of some intellectual want. His ideas, his memories, his dreams crowded thick and confused upon him; he wished to arrange them in order, and he could not. He was overpowered by the unorganized affluence of his own imagination and intellect. He had often, even as a child, fancied that he was formed to do something in the world; but he had never steadily considered what it was to be, whether he was to become a man of books or a man of deeds. He had written poetry when it poured irresistibly from the fount of emotion within, but looked at his effusions with a cold and neglectful eye when the enthusiasm had passed away.

Maltravers was not much gnawed by the desire of fame,—perhaps few men of real genius are, until artificially worked up to it. There is in a sound and correct intellect, with all its gifts fairly balanced, a calm consciousness of power, a certainty that when its strength is fairly put out, it must be to realize the usual result of strength. Men of second-rate faculties, on the contrary, are fretful and nervous, fidgeting after a celebrity which they do not estimate by their own talents, but by the talents of some one else. They see a tower, but are occupied only with measuring its shadow, and think their own height (which they never calculate) is to cast as

broad a one over the earth. It is the short man who is always throwing up his chin and is as erect as a dart. The tall man stoops, and the strong man is not always using the dumb-bells.

Maltravers had not yet, then, the keen and sharp yearning for reputation; he had not, as yet, tasted its sweets and bitters,—fatal draught, which, *once* tasted, begets too often an insatiable thirst!—neither had he enemies and decriers whom he was desirous of abashing by merit. And that is a very ordinary cause for exertion in proud minds. He was, it is true, generally reputed clever, and fools were afraid of him; but as he actively interfered with no man's pretensions, so no man thought it necessary to call him a blockhead. At present, therefore, it was quietly and naturally that his mind was working its legitimate way to its destiny of exertion. He began idly and carelessly to note down his thoughts and impressions; what was once put on the paper, begot new matter; his ideas became more lucid to himself; and the page grew a looking-glass, which presented the likeness of his own features. He began by writing with rapidity, and without method. He had no object but to please himself and to find a vent for an overcharged spirit; and, like most writings of the young, the matter was egotistical. We commence with the small nucleus of passion and experience, to widen the circle afterwards; and perhaps the most extensive and universal masters of life and character have begun by being egotists. For there is in a man that has much in him a wonderfully acute and sensitive perception of his own existence. An imaginative and susceptible person has, indeed, ten times as much life as a dull fellow, “an he be Hercules.” He multiplies himself in a thousand objects, associates each with his own identity, lives in each, and almost looks upon the world with its infinite objects as a part of his individual being. Afterwards, as he tames down, he withdraws his forces into the citadel; but he still has a knowledge of, and an interest in, the land they once covered. He understands other people, for he has lived in other people,—the dead and the living; fancied himself now Brutus, and now Cæsar, and

thought how *he* should act in almost every imaginable circumstance of life.

Thus, when he begins to paint human characters essentially different from his own, his knowledge comes to him almost intuitively. It is as if he were describing the mansions in which he himself has formerly lodged, though for a short time. Hence in great writers of History, of Romance, of the Drama, the gusto with which they paint their personages,—their creations are flesh and blood, not shadows or machines.

Maltravers was at first, then, an egotist in the matter of his rude and desultory sketches; in the manner, as I said before, he was careless and negligent,—as men will be who have not yet found that expression is an art. Still, those wild and valueless essays, those rapt and secret confessions of his own heart, were a delight to him. He began to taste the transport, the intoxication, of an author. And oh, what a luxury is there in that first love of the Muse; that process by which we give palpable form to the long-intangible visions which have flitted across us,—the beautiful ghost of the Ideal within us, which we invoke in the Gadara of our still closets with the wand of the simple pen!

It was early noon, the day after he had formed his acquaintance with the De Montaignes, that Maltravers sat in his favourite room,—the one he had selected for his study from the many chambers of his large and solitary habitation. He sat in a recess by the open window which looked on the lake; and books were scattered on his table, and Maltravers was jotting down his criticisms on what he read, mingled with his impressions on what he saw. It is the pleasantest kind of composition,—the note-book of a man who studies in retirement, who observes in society, who in all things can admire and feel. He was yet engaged in this easy task when Cesarini was announced, and the young brother of the fair Teresa entered his apartment.

“I have availed myself soon of your invitation,” said the Italian.

“I acknowledge the compliment,” replied Maltravers, pressing the hand shyly held out to him.

“I see you have been writing,—I thought you were at

tached to literature. I read it in your countenance, I heard it in your voice," said Cesarini, seating himself.

"I have been idly beguiling a very idle leisure, it is true," said Maltravers.

"But you do not write for yourself alone, you have an eye to the great tribunals,—Time and the Public."

"Not so, I assure you honestly," said Maltravers, smiling. "If you look at the books on my table, you will see that they are the great masterpieces of ancient and modern lore. These are studies that discourage tyros —"

"But inspire them."

"I do not think so. Models may form our taste as critics, but do not excite us to be authors. I fancy that our own emotions, our own sense of our destiny, make the great lever of the inert matter we accumulate. 'Look in thy heart, and write,' said an old English writer,¹— who did not, however, practise what he preached. And you, Signor —"

"Am nothing, and would be something," said the young man, shortly and bitterly.

"And how does that wish not realize its object?"

"Merely because I am Italian," said Cesarini. "With us there is no literary public,—no vast reading class; we have *dilettanti* and *litterati* and students, and even authors; but these make only a coterie, not a public. I have written, I have published; but no one listened to me. I am an author without readers."

"It is no uncommon case in England," said Maltravers.

The Italian continued: "I thought to live in the mouths of men; to stir up thoughts long dumb; to awaken the strings of the old lyre! In vain. Like the nightingale, I sing only to break my heart with a false and melancholy emulation of other notes."

"There are epochs in all countries," said Maltravers, gently, "when peculiar veins of literature are out of vogue, and when no genius can bring them into public notice. But you wisely said there were two tribunals,—the Public and Time. You have still the last to appeal to. Your great Italian historians wrote for the unborn,—their works not even published

till their death. That indifference to living reputation has in it, to me, something of the sublime."

"I cannot imitate them,—and they were not poets," said Cesarini, sharply. "To poets, praise is a necessary aliment,—neglect is death."

"My dear Signor Cesarini," said the Englishman, feelingly, "do not give way to these thoughts. There ought to be in a healthful ambition the stubborn stuff of persevering longevity; it must live on, and hope for the day which comes, slow or fast, to all whose labours deserve the goal."

"But perhaps mine do not. I sometimes fear so,—it is a horrid thought."

"You are very young yet," said Maltravers; "how few at your age ever sicken for fame! That first step is perhaps the half way to the prize."

I am not sure that Ernest thought exactly as he spoke; but it was the most delicate consolation to offer to a man whose abrupt frankness embarrassed and distressed him. The young man shook his head despondingly. Maltravers tried to change the subject. He rose and moved to the balcony, which overhung the lake; he talked of the weather; he dwelt on the exquisite scenery; he pointed to the minute and more latent beauties around, with the eye and taste of one who had looked at Nature in her details. The poet grew more animated and cheerful; he became even eloquent; he quoted poetry and he talked it. Maltravers was more and more interested in him. He felt a curiosity to know if his talents equalled his aspirations; he hinted to Cesarini his wish to see his compositions: it was just what the young man desired. Poor Cesarini! It was much to him to get a new listener, and he fondly imagined every honest listener must be a warm admirer. But with the coyness of his caste, he affected reluctance and hesitation; he dallied with his own impatient yearnings. And Maltravers, to smooth his way, proposed an excursion on the lake.

"One of my men shall row," said he; "you shall recite to me, and I will be to you what the old housekeeper was to Molière."

Maltravers had deep good-nature where he was touched, though he had not a superfluity of what is called good-humour, which floats on the surface and smiles on all alike. He had much of the milk of human kindness, but little of its oil.

The poet assented, and they were soon upon the lake. It was a sultry day, and it was noon; so the boat crept slowly along by the shadow of the shore, and Cesarini drew from his breast-pocket some manuscripts of small and beautiful writing. Who does not know the pains a young poet takes to bestow a fair dress on his darling rhymes!

Cesarini read well and feelingly. Everything was in favour of the reader,—his own poetical countenance; his voice; his enthusiasm, half-suppressed; the pre-engaged interest of the auditor; the dreamy loveliness of the hour and scene,—for there is a great deal as to time in these things. Maltravers listened intently. It is very difficult to judge of the exact merit of poetry in another language, even when we know that language well,—so much is there in the untranslatable magic of expression, the little subtleties of style. But Maltravers, fresh, as he himself had said, from the study of great and original writers, could not but feel that he was listening to feeble though melodious mediocrity. It was the poetry of words, not things. He thought it cruel, however, to be hypercritical, and he uttered all the commonplaces of eulogium that occurred to him. The young man was enchanted. “And yet,” said he with a sigh, “I have no Public. In England they would appreciate me.” Alas! in England at that moment there were five hundred poets as young, as ardent, and yet more gifted, whose hearts beat with the same desire, whose nerves were broken by the same disappointments.

Maltravers found that his young friend would not listen to any judgment not purely favourable. The archbishop in “*Gil Blas*” was not more touchy upon any criticism that was not panegyric. Maltravers thought it a bad sign; but he recollected “*Gil Blas*,” and prudently refrained from bringing on himself the benevolent wish of “*beaucoup de bonheur et un peu plus de bon goût*.” When Cesarini had finished his

manuscript, he was anxious to conclude the excursion,—he longed to be at home, and think over the admiration he had excited. But he left his poems with Maltravers, and getting on shore by the remains of Pliny's villa, was soon out of sight.

Maltravers that evening read the poems with attention. His first opinion was confirmed. The young man wrote without knowledge. He had never felt the passions he painted, never been in the situations he described. There was no originality in him, for there was no experience; it was exquisite mechanism, his verse,—nothing more. It might well deceive him, for it could not but flatter his ear,—and Tasso's silver march rang not more musically than did the chiming stanzas of Castruccio Cesarini.

The perusal of this poetry, and his conversation with the poet, threw Maltravers into a fit of deep musing. "This poor Cesarini may warn me against myself!" thought he. "Better hew wood and draw water than attach ourselves devotedly to an art in which we have not the capacity to excel. It is to throw away the healthful objects of life for a diseased dream; worse than the Rosicrucians, it is to make a sacrifice of all human beauty for the smile of a sylphid that never visits us but in visions." Maltravers looked over his own compositions, and thrust them into the fire. He slept ill that night. His pride was a little dejected; he was like a beauty who has seen a caricature of herself.

CHAPTER III.

STILL follow SENSE, of every art the Soul.

POPE: *Moral Essays* (*Essay iv.*).

ERNEST MALTRAVERS spent much of his time with the family of De Montaigne. There is no period of life in which we are more accessible to the sentiment of friendship than in the intervals of moral exhaustion which succeed to the disap-

pointments of the passions. There is, then, something inviting in those gentler feelings which keep alive, but do not fever, the circulation of the affections. Maltravers looked with the benevolence of a brother upon the brilliant, versatile, and restless Teresa. She was the last person in the world he could have been in love with; for his nature, ardent, excitable, yet fastidious, required something of repose in the manners and temperament of the woman whom he could love, and Teresa scarcely knew what repose was. Whether playing with her children (and she had two lovely ones,—the eldest six years old), or teasing her calm and meditative husband, or pouring out extempore verses, or rattling over airs, which she never finished, on the guitar or piano, or making excursions on the lake, or, in short, in whatever occupation she appeared as the Cynthia of the minute, she was always gay and mobile, never out of humour, never acknowledging a single care or cross in life, never susceptible of grief, save when her brother's delicate health or morbid temper saddened her atmosphere of sunshine. Even then, the sanguine elasticity of her mind and constitution quickly recovered from the depression; and she persuaded herself that Castruccio would grow stronger every year, and ripen into a celebrated and happy man. Castruccio himself lived what romantic poetasters call the "life of a poet." He loved to see the sun rise over the distant Alps, or the midnight moon sleeping on the lake. He spent half the day, and often half the night, in solitary rambles, weaving his airy rhymes or indulging his gloomy reveries, and he thought loneliness made the element of a poet. Alas! Dante, Alfieri, even Petrarch, might have taught him that a poet must have intimate knowledge of men as well as mountains, if he desire to become the CREATOR. When Shelley, in one of his prefaces, boasts of being familiar with Alps and glaciers and Heaven knows what, the critical artist cannot help wishing that he had been rather more familiar with Fleet Street or the Strand. Perhaps then that remarkable genius might have been more capable of realizing characters of flesh and blood, and have composed corporeal and consummate wholes, not confused and glittering fragments.

Though Ernest was attached to Teresa and deeply interested in Castruccio, it was for De Montaigne for whom he experienced the higher and graver sentiment of esteem. This Frenchman was one acquainted with a much larger world than that of the Coteries. He had served in the army, had been employed with distinction in civil affairs, and was of that robust and healthful moral constitution which can bear with every variety of social life, and estimate calmly the balance of our moral fortunes. Trial and experience had left him that true philosopher who is too wise to be an optimist, too just to be a misanthrope. He enjoyed life with sober judgment, and pursued the path most suited to himself, without declaring it to be the best for others. He was a little hard, perhaps, upon the errors that belong to weakness and conceit, — not to those that have their source in great natures or generous thoughts. Among his characteristics was a profound admiration for England. His own country he half loved, yet half disdained. The impetuosity and levity of his compatriots displeased his sober and dignified notions. He could not forgive them (he was wont to say) for having made the two grand experiments of popular revolution and military despotism in vain. He sympathized neither with the young enthusiasts who desired a republic, without well knowing the numerous strata of habits and customs upon which that fabric, if designed for permanence, should be built, nor with the uneducated and fierce chivalry that longed for a restoration of the warrior empire, nor with the dull and arrogant bigots who connected all ideas of order and government with the ill-starred and worn-out dynasty of the Bourbons. In fact, good sense was with him the *principium et fons* of all theories and all practice; and it was this quality that attached him to the English. His philosophy on this head was rather curious.

“Good sense,” said he one day to Maltravers, as they were walking to and fro at De Montaigne’s villa, by the margin of the lake, “is not a merely intellectual attribute. It is rather the result of a just equilibrium of all our faculties, spiritual and moral. The dishonest, or the toys of their own passions,

may have genius, but they rarely, if ever, have good sense in the conduct of life. They may often win large prizes, but it is by a game of chance, not skill. But the man whom I perceive walking an honourable and upright career, just to others, and also to himself (for we owe justice to ourselves,—to the care of our fortunes, our character, to the management of our passions), is a more dignified representative of his Maker than the mere child of genius. Of such a man we say he has GOOD SENSE,—yes, but he has also integrity, self-respect, and self-denial. A thousand trials which his sense braves and conquers, are temptations also to his probity, his temper,—in a word, to all the many sides of his complicated nature. Now, I do not think he will have this *good sense* any more than a drunkard will have strong nerves, unless he be in the constant habit of keeping his mind clear from the intoxication of envy, vanity, and the various emotions that dupe and mislead us. Good sense is not, therefore, an abstract quality or a solitary talent, but it is the natural result of the habit of thinking justly, and therefore seeing clearly, and is as different from the sagacity that belongs to a diplomatist or attorney as the philosophy of Socrates differed from the rhetoric of Gorgias. As a mass of individual excellences make up this attribute in a man, so a mass of such men thus characterized give a character to a nation. Your England is therefore renowned for its good sense; but it is renowned also for the excellences which accompany strong sense in an individual,—high honesty and faith in its dealings, a warm love of justice and fair play, a general freedom from the violent crimes common on the Continent, and the energetic perseverance in enterprise once commenced, which results from a bold and healthful disposition.”

“Our wars, our debt —” began Maltravers.

“Pardon me,” interrupted De Montaigne, “I am speaking of your people, not of your government. A government is often a very unfair representative of a nation. But even in the wars you allude to, if you examine, you will generally find them originate in the love of justice, which is the basis of good sense, not from any insane desire of conquest or glory.

A man, however sensible, must have a heart in his bosom, and a great nation cannot be a piece of selfish clockwork. Suppose you and I are sensible, prudent men, and we see in a crowd one violent fellow unjustly knocking another on the head, we should be brutes, not men, if we did not interfere with the savage; but if we thrust ourselves into a crowd with a large bludgeon, and belabour our neighbours, with the hope that the spectators would cry, 'See what a bold, strong fellow that is!' — then we should be only playing the mad-man from the motive of the coxcomb. I fear you will find in the military history of the French and English the application of my parable."

"Yet still, I confess, there is a gallantry and a nobleman-like and Norman spirit in the whole French nation which make me forgive many of their excesses, and think they are destined for great purposes, when experience shall have sobered their hot blood. Some nations, as some men, are slow in arriving at maturity; others seem men in their cradle. The English, thanks to their sturdy Saxon origin, elevated, not depressed, by the Norman infusion, never were children. The difference is striking, when you regard the representatives of both in their great men, whether writers or active citizens."

"Yes," said De Montaigne, "in Milton and Cromwell there is nothing of the brilliant child. I cannot say as much for Voltaire or Napoleon. Even Richelieu, the manliest of our statesmen, had so much of the French infant in him as to fancy himself a *beau garçon*, a gallant, a wit, and a poet. As for the Racine school of writers, they were not out of the leading-strings of imitation, — cold copyists of a pseudo-classic in which they saw the form, and never caught the spirit. What so little Roman, Greek, Hebrew, as their Roman, Greek, and Hebrew dramas? Your rude Shakspeare's 'Julius Cæsar,' even his 'Troilus and Cressida,' have the ancient spirit, precisely as they are imitations of nothing ancient. But our Frenchmen copied the giant images of old just as the school-girl copies a drawing, by holding it up to the window and tracing the lines on silver paper."

"But your new writers,—De Staël, Chateaubriand?"¹

"I find no fault with the sentimentalists," answered the severe critic, "but that of exceeding feebleness. They have no bone and muscle in their genius; all is flaccid and rotund in its feminine symmetry. They seem to think that vigour consists in florid phrases and little aphorisms, and delineate all the mighty tempests of the human heart with the polished prettiness of a miniature-painter on ivory. No; these two are children of another kind,—affected, tricked-out, well-dressed children, very clever, very precocious, but children still. Their whinings and their sentimentalities and their egotism and their vanity cannot interest masculine beings who know what life and its stern objects are."

"Your brother-in-law," said Maltravers, with a slight smile, "must find in you a discouraging censor."

"My poor Castruccio!" replied De Montaigne, with a half-sigh; "he is one of those victims whom I believe to be more common than we dream of,—men whose aspirations are above their powers. I agree with a great German writer, that in the first walks of Art no man has a right to enter unless he is convinced that he has strength and speed for the goal. Castruccio might be an amiable member of society,—nay, an able and useful man,—if he would apply the powers he possesses to the rewards they may obtain. He has talent enough to win him reputation in any profession but that of a poet."

"But authors who obtain immortality are not always first-rate."

"First-rate in their way, I suspect, even if that way be false or trivial. They must be connected with the *history* of their literature; you must be able to say of them, 'In this school, be it bad or good, they exerted such and such an influence,'—in a word, they must form a link in the great chain of a nation's authors, which may be afterwards forgotten by the superficial, but without which the chain would be incomplete. And thus, if not first-rate for all time, they have been first-

¹ At the time of this conversation the latter school, adorned by Victor Hugo, who, with notions of art elaborately wrong, is still a man of extraordinary genius, had not risen into its present equivocal reputation.

rate in their own day. But Castruccio is only the echo of others,—he can neither found a school nor ruin one. Yet this,” again added De Montaigne, after a pause, “this melancholy malady in my brother-in-law would cure itself, perhaps, if he were not Italian. In your animated and bustling country, after sufficient disappointment as a poet, he would glide into some other calling, and his vanity and craving for effect would find a rational and manly outlet. But in Italy, what can a clever man do if he is not a poet or a robber? If he love his country, that crime is enough to unfit him for civil employment, and his mind cannot stir a step in the bold channels of speculation without falling foul of the Austrian or the Pope. No; the best I can hope for Castruccio is that he will end in an antiquary, and dispute about ruins with the Romans. Better that than mediocre poetry.”

Maltravers was silent and thoughtful. Strange to say, De Montaigne's views did not discourage his own new and secret ardour for intellectual triumphs,—not because he felt that he was now able to achieve them, but because he felt the iron of his own nature, and knew that a man who *has* iron in his nature must ultimately hit upon some way of shaping the metal into use.

The host and guest were now joined by Castruccio himself,—silent and gloomy, as indeed he usually was, especially in the presence of De Montaigne, with whom he felt his “self-love” wounded; for though he longed to despise his hard brother-in-law, the young poet was compelled to acknowledge that De Montaigne was not a man to be despised.

Maltravers dined with the De Montaignes and spent the evening with them. He could not but observe that Castruccio, who affected in his verses the softest sentiments, who was, indeed, by original nature tender and gentle, had become so completely warped by that worst of all mental vices,—the eternally pondering on his own excellences, talents, mortifications, and ill-usage,—that he never contributed to the gratification of those around him; he had none of the little arts of social benevolence, none of the playful youth of disposition which usually belongs to the good-hearted, and for which men

of a master-genius, however elevated their studies, however stern or reserved to the vulgar world, are commonly noticeable amidst the friends they love or in the home they adorn. Occupied with one dream, centred in self, the young Italian was sullen and morose to all who did not sympathize with his own morbid fancies. From the children, the sister, the friend, the whole living earth, he fled to a poem on Solitude, or stanzas upon Fame. Maltravers said to himself: "I will never be an author, I will never sigh for renown, if I am to purchase shadows at such a price!"

CHAPTER IV.

It cannot be too deeply impressed on the mind that application is the price to be paid for mental acquisitions, and that it is as absurd to expect them without it as to hope for a harvest where we have not sown the seed.

In everything we do, we may be possibly laying a train of consequences, the operation of which may terminate only with our existence.

BAILEY : *Essays on the Formation and Publication of Opinions.*

TIME passed, and autumn was far advanced towards winter; still Maltravers lingered at Como. He saw little of any other family than that of the De Montaignes, and the greater part of his time was necessarily spent alone. His occupation continued to be that of making experiments of his own powers, and these gradually became bolder and more comprehensive. He took care, however, not to show his "Diversions of Como" to his new friends; he wanted no audience, he dreamed of no Public, he desired merely to practise his own mind. He became aware, of his own accord, as he proceeded, that a man can neither study with much depth, nor compose with much art, unless he has some definite object before him, — in the first, some one branch of knowledge to master; in the last, some one conception to work out. Maltravers fell back upon his boyish passion for metaphysical speculation; but with what different results did he now wrestle with the subtle Schoolmen, now that he had practically known man-

kind! How insensibly new lights broke in upon him as he threaded the labyrinth of cause and effect by which we seek to arrive at that curious and biform monster, our own nature. His mind became saturated, as it were, with these profound studies and meditations; and when at length he paused from them, he felt as if he had not been living in solitude, but had gone through a process of action in the busy world, so much juster, so much clearer, had become his knowledge of himself and others. But though these researches coloured, they did not limit, his intellectual pursuits. Poetry and the lighter letters became to him, not merely a relaxation, but a critical and thoughtful study. He delighted to penetrate into the causes that have made the airy webs spun by men's fancies so permanent and powerful in their influence over the hard, work-day world. And what a lovely scene, what a sky, what an air wherein to commence the projects of that ambition which seeks to establish an empire in the hearts and memories of mankind! I believe it has a great effect on the future labours of a writer,—the place where he first dreams that it is his destiny to write!

From these pursuits Ernest was aroused by another letter from Cleveland. His kind friend had been disappointed and vexed that Maltravers did not follow his advice and return to England; he had shown his displeasure by not answering Ernest's letter of excuses. But lately he had been seized with a dangerous illness which reduced him to the brink of the grave; and with a heart softened by the exhaustion of the frame, he now wrote in the first moments of convalescence to Maltravers, informing him of his attack and danger, and once more urging him to return. The thought that Cleveland, the dear, kind, gentle guardian of his youth, had been near unto death, that he might never more have hung upon that fostering hand nor replied to that paternal voice, smote Ernest with terror and remorse. He resolved instantly to return to England, and made his preparations accordingly.

He went to take leave of the De Montaignes. Teresa was trying to teach her first-born to read; and seated by the open window of the villa, in her neat, not precise, dishabille, with

the little boy's delicate, yet bold and healthy countenance looking up fearlessly at hers, while she was endeavouring to initiate him — half gravely, half laughingly — into the mysteries of monosyllables, the pretty boy and the fair young mother made a delightful picture. De Montaigne was reading the *Essays* of his celebrated namesake, in whom he boasted, I know not with what justice, to claim an ancestor. From time to time he looked from the page to take a glance at the progress of his heir and keep up with the march of intellect. But he did not interfere with the maternal lecture; he was wise enough to know that there is a kind of sympathy between a child and a mother which is worth all the grave superiority of a father in making learning palatable to young years. He was far too clever a man not to despise all the systems of forcing infants under knowledge-frames, which are the present fashion. He knew that philosophers never made a greater mistake than in insisting so much upon beginning abstract education from the cradle. It is quite enough to attend to an infant's temper, and correct that cursed predilection for telling fibs which falsifies all Dr. Reid's absurd theory about innate propensities to truth, and makes the prevailing epidemic of the nursery. Above all, what advantage ever compensates for hurting a child's health or breaking his spirit? Never let him learn, more than you can help it, the crushing bitterness of fear. A bold child who looks you in the face, speaks the truth and shames the devil, — that is the stuff of which to make good and brave — ay, and wise men.

Maltravers entered, unannounced, into this charming family party, and stood unobserved for a few moments by the open door. The little pupil was the first to perceive him, and forgetful of monosyllables, ran to greet him; for Maltravers, though gentle rather than gay, was a favourite with children, and his fair, calm, gracious countenance did more for him with them than if, like Goldsmith's Burchell, his pockets had been filled with gingerbread and apples. "Ah, fie on you, Mr. Maltravers!" cried Teresa, rising; "you have blown away all the characters I have been endeavouring this last hour to imprint upon sand."

"Not so, Signora," said Maltravers, seating himself, and placing the child on his knee; "my young friend will set to work again with a greater gusto after this little break in upon his labours."

"You will stay with us all day, I hope?" said De Montaigne.

"Indeed," said Maltravers, "I am come to ask permission to do so, for to-morrow I depart for England."

"Is it possible?" cried Teresa. "How sudden! How we shall miss you! Oh! don't go. But perhaps you have bad news from England?"

"I have news that summon me hence," replied Maltravers; "my guardian and second father has been dangerously ill. I am uneasy about him, and reproach myself for having forgotten him so long in your seductive society."

"I am really sorry to lose you," said De Montaigne, with greater warmth in his tones than in his words. "I hope heartily we shall meet again soon. You will come, perhaps, to Paris?"

"Probably," said Maltravers; "and you, perhaps, to England?"

"Ah, how I should like it!" exclaimed Teresa.

"No, you would not," said her husband; "you would not like England at all,—you would call it *triste* beyond measure. It is one of those countries of which a native should be proud, but which has no amusement for a stranger, precisely because full of such serious and stirring occupations to the citizens. The pleasantest countries for strangers are the worst countries for natives (witness Italy); and *vice versa*."

Teresa shook her dark curls, and would not be convinced.

"And where is Castruccio?" asked Maltravers.

"In his boat on the lake," replied Teresa. "He will be inconsolable at your departure; you are the only person he can understand, or who understands him,—the only person in Italy, I had almost said in the whole world."

"Well, we shall meet at dinner," said Ernest; "meanwhile, let me prevail on you to accompany me to the *Pliniana*. I wish to say farewell to that crystal spring."

Teresa, delighted at any excursion, readily consented.

"And I too, Mamma," cried the child, "and my little sister?"

"Oh, certainly!" said Maltravers, speaking for the parents.

So the party was soon ready, and they pushed off in the clear, genial noontide (for November in Italy is as early as September in the North) across the sparkling and dimpled waters. The children prattled, and the grown-up people talked on a thousand matters. It was a pleasant day, that last day at Como; for the farewells of friendship have indeed something of the melancholy, but not the anguish, of those of love. Perhaps it would be better if we could get rid of love altogether. Life would go on smoother and happier without it. Friendship is the wine of existence, but love is the dram-drinking.

When they returned, they found Castruccio seated on the lawn. He did not appear so much dejected at the prospect of Ernest's departure as Teresa had anticipated; for Castruccio Cesarini was a very jealous man, and he had lately been chagrined and discontented with seeing the delight that the De Montaignes took in Ernest's society.

"Why is this?" he often asked himself,— "why are they more pleased with this stranger's society than mine? My ideas are as fresh, as original; I have as much genius; yet even my dry brother-in-law allows *his* talents, and predicts that *he* will be an eminent man, while *I*— No, one is not a prophet in one's own country!"

Unhappy young man, his mind bore all the rank weeds of the morbid poetical character, and the weeds choked up the flowers that the soil, properly cultivated, should alone bear! Yet that crisis in life awaited Castruccio, in which a sensitive and poetical man is made or marred,—the crisis in which a sentiment is replaced by the passions; in which love for some real object gathers the scattered rays of the heart into a focus. Out of that ordeal he might pass a purer and manlier being,—so Maltravers often hoped. Maltravers then little thought how closely connected with his own fate was to be that passage in the history of the Italian! Castruccio contrived to

take Maltravers aside, and as he led the Englishman through the wood that backed the mansion, he said, with some embarrassment, "You go, I suppose, to London?"

"I shall pass through it. Can I execute any commission for you?"

"Why, yes; my poems! I think of publishing them in England. Your aristocracy cultivate the Italian letters; and perhaps I may be read by the fair and noble,—*that* is the proper audience of poets. For the vulgar herd, I disdain it!"

"My dear Castruccio, I will undertake to see your poems published in London, if you wish it; but do not be sanguine. In England we read little poetry, even in our own language, and we are shamefully indifferent to foreign literature."

"Yes, foreign literature generally, and you are right; but *my* poems are of another kind. They must command attention in a polished and intelligent circle."

"Well, let the experiment be tried; you can let me have the poems when we part."

"I thank you," said Castruccio, in a joyous tone, pressing his friend's hand; and for the rest of that evening, he seemed an altered being,—he even caressed the children, and did not sneer at the grave conversation of his brother-in-law.

When Maltravers rose to depart, Castruccio gave him the packet; and then, utterly engrossed with his own imagined futurity of fame, vanished from the room to indulge his reveries. He cared no longer for Maltravers,—he had put him to use; he could not be sorry for his departure, for that departure was the Avatar of His appearance to a new world!

A small, dull rain was falling, though, at intervals, the stars broke through the unsettled clouds, and Teresa did not, therefore, venture from the house; she presented her smooth cheek to the young guest to salute, pressed him by the hand, and bade him adieu with tears in her eyes. "Ah!" said she, "when we meet again I hope you will be married,—I shall love your wife dearly. There is no happiness like marriage and home!" and she looked with ingenuous tenderness at De Montaigne.

Maltravers sighed; his thoughts flew back to Alice. Where

now was that lone and friendless girl whose innocent love had once brightened a home for *him*? He answered by a vague and mechanical commonplace, and quitted the room with De Montaigne, who insisted on seeing him depart. As they neared the lake, De Montaigne broke the silence.

"My dear Maltravers," he said, with a serious and thoughtful affection in his voice, "we may not meet again for years. I have a warm interest in your happiness and career,—yes, *career*; I repeat the word. I do not habitually seek to inspire young men with ambition. Enough for most of them to be good and honourable citizens. But in your case it is different. I see in you the earnest and meditative, not rash and overweening, youth which is usually productive of a distinguished manhood. Your mind is not yet settled, it is true; but it is fast becoming clear and mellow from the first ferment of boyish dreams and passions. You have everything in your favour,—competence, birth, connections; and, above all, you are an Englishman. You have a mighty stage, on which, it is true, you cannot establish a footing without merit and without labour,—so much the better,—on which strong and resolute rivals will urge you on to emulation, and their competition will task your keenest powers. Think what a glorious fate it is to have an influence on the vast but ever-growing mind of such a country; to feel, when you retire from the busy scene, that you have played an unforgotten part, that you have been the medium, under God's great will, of circulating new ideas throughout the world,—of upholding the glorious priesthood of the Honest and the Beautiful. This is the true ambition; the desire of mere personal notoriety is vanity, not ambition. Do not, then, be lukewarm or supine. The trait I have observed in you," added the Frenchman, with a smile, "most prejudicial to your chances of distinction is that you are *too* philosophical, too apt to *cui-bono* all the exertions that interfere with the indolence of cultivated leisure. And you must not suppose, Maltravers, that an active career will be a path of roses. At present you have no enemies; but the moment you attempt distinction, you will be abused, calumniated, reviled. You will be shocked

at the wrath you excite, and sigh for your old obscurity, and consider, as Franklin has it, that 'you have paid too dear for your whistle.' But in return for individual enemies, what a noble recompense to have made the Public itself your friend, perhaps even Posterity your familiar! Besides," added De Montaigne, with almost a religious solemnity in his voice, "there is a conscience of the head as well as of the heart, and in old age we feel as much remorse if we have wasted our natural talents as if we had perverted our natural virtues. The profound and exultant satisfaction with which a man who knows that he has not lived in vain, that he has entailed on the world an heirloom of instruction or delight, looks back upon departed struggles, is one of the happiest emotions of which the conscience can be capable. What, indeed, are the petty faults we commit as individuals, affecting but a narrow circle, ceasing with our own lives, to the incalculable and everlasting good we may produce as public men by one book or by one law? Depend upon it that the Almighty, who sums up all the good and all the evil done by his creatures in a just balance, will not judge the august benefactors of the world with the same severity as those drones of society who have no great services to show in the eternal ledger as a set-off to the indulgence of their small vices. These things rightly considered, Maltravers, you will have every inducement that can tempt a lofty mind and a pure ambition to awaken from the voluptuous indolence of the literary Sybarite, and contend worthily in the world's wide Altis for a great prize."

Maltravers never before felt so flattered, so stirred into high resolves. The stately eloquence, the fervid encouragement, of this man, usually so cold and fastidious, roused him like the sound of a trumpet. He stopped short, his breath heaved thick, his cheek flushed. "De Montaigne," said he, "your words have cleared away a thousand doubts and scruples,—they have gone right to my heart. For the first time I understand what fame is,—what the object and what the reward of labour! Visions, hopes, aspirations, I may have had before; for months a new spirit has been fluttering within me. I have felt the wings breaking from the shell; but all was con-

fused, dim, uncertain. I doubted the wisdom of effort, with life so short and the pleasures of youth so sweet. I now look no longer on life but as a part of the eternity to which I *feel* we were born, and I recognize the solemn truth that our objects, to be worthy life, should be worthy of creatures in whom the living principle never is extinct. Farewell! come joy or sorrow, failure or success, I will struggle to deserve your friendship."

Maltravers sprang into his boat, and the shades of night soon snatched him from the lingering gaze of De Montaigne.

BOOK IV.

ἐπὶ δὲ ξένω

Ναίεις χθονί, τὰς ἀνάνδρου

Κοίτας ὀλέσασα λέκτρον

Τάλαινα.

EURIPIDES : *Medea*, 442.

Strange is the land that holds thee, and thy couch
Is widowed of the loved one. — *Translation by R. G.*

CHAPTER I.

I, ALAS !

Have lived but on this earth a few sad years ;

And so my lot was ordered, that a father

First turned the moments of awakening life

To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope.

Cenci.

FROM accompanying Maltravers along the noiseless progress of mental education, we are now called a while to cast our glances back at the ruder and harsher ordeal which Alice Darvil was ordained to pass. Along her path poetry shed no flowers, nor were her lonely steps towards the distant shrine at which her pilgrimage found its rest lighted by the mystic lamp of science, or guided by the thousand stars which are never dim in the heavens for those favoured eyes from which genius and fancy have removed many of the films of clay. Not along the ærial and exalted ways that wind far above the homes and business of common men,—the solitary Alps of Spiritual Philosophy,—wandered the desolate steps of the child of poverty and sorrow. On the beaten and rugged highways of common life, with a weary heart and with bleeding

feet, she went her melancholy course. But the goal which is the great secret of life, the *summum arcanum* of all philosophy, whether the Practical or the Ideal, was perhaps no less attainable for that humble girl than for the elastic step and aspiring heart of him who thirsted after the Great and almost believed in the Impossible.

We return to that dismal night in which Alice was torn from the roof of her lover. It was long before she recovered her consciousness of what had passed, and gained a full perception of the fearful revolution which had taken place in her destinies. It was then a gray and dreary morning twilight; and the rude but covered vehicle which bore her was rolling along the deep ruts of an unfrequented road, winding among the uninclosed and mountainous wastes that, in England, usually betoken the neighbourhood of the sea. With a shudder Alice looked round: Walters, her father's accomplice, lay extended at her feet, and his heavy breathing showed that he was fast asleep. Darvil himself was urging on the jaded and sorry horse, and his broad back was turned towards Alice; the rain, from which, in his position, he was but ill protected by the awning, dripped dismally from his slouched hat; and now, as he turned round, and his sinister and gloomy gaze rested upon the face of Alice, his bad countenance, rendered more haggard by the cold, raw light of the cheerless dawn, completed the hideous picture of unveiled and ruffianly wretchedness.

"Ho, ho! Alley, so you are come to your senses," said he, with a kind of joyless grin. "I am glad of it, for I can have no fainting fine ladies with me. You have had a long holiday, Alley; you must now learn once more to work for your poor father. Ah, you have been d—d sly! But never mind the past,—I forgive it. You must not run away again without my leave; if you are fond of sweethearts I won't balk you, but your old father must go shares, Alley."

Alice could hear no more; she covered her face with the cloak that had been thrown about her, and though she did not faint, her senses seemed to be locked and paralyzed. By and by Walters woke, and the two men, heedless of her pres-

ence, conversed upon their plans. By degrees she recovered sufficient self-possession to listen, in the instinctive hope that some plan of escape might be suggested to her. But from what she could gather of the incoherent and various projects they discussed, one after another,—disputing upon each with frightful oaths and scarce intelligible slang,—she could only learn that it was resolved at all events to leave the district in which they were; but whither, seemed yet all undecided. The cart halted at last at a miserable-looking hut, which the signpost announced to be an inn that afforded good accommodation to travellers; to which announcement was annexed the following epigrammatic distich:—

“Old Tom he is the best of gin;
Drink him once, and you ’ll drink him *agin*!”

The hovel stood so remote from all other habitations, and the waste around was so bare of trees, and even shrubs, that Alice saw with despair that all hope of flight in such a place would be indeed a chimera. But to make assurance doubly sure, Darvil himself, lifting her from the cart, conducted her up a broken and unlighted staircase into a sort of loft rather than a room, and rudely pushing her in, turned the key upon her and descended. The weather was cold, the livid damps hung upon the distained walls, and there was neither fire nor hearth; but thinly clad as she was,—her cloak and shawl her principal covering,—she did not feel the cold, for her heart was more chilly than the airs of heaven. At noon an old woman brought her some food, which, consisting of fish and poached game, was better than might have been expected in such a place, and what would have been deemed a feast under her father’s roof. With an inviting leer, the crone pointed to a pewter measure of raw spirits that accompanied the viands, and assured her, in a cracked and maudlin voice, that “Old Tom” was a kinder friend than any of the young fellers! This intrusion ended, Alice was again left alone till dusk, when Darvil entered with a bundle of clothes such as are worn by the peasants of that primitive district of England.

"There, Alley," said he, "put on this warm toggery,—finery won't do now. We must leave no scent in the track; the hounds are after us, my little blowen. Here's a nice stuff gown for you, and a red cloak that would frighten a turkey-cock. As to the other cloak and shawl, don't be afraid,—they sha'n't go to the pop-shop, but we'll take care of them against we get to some large town where there are young fellows with blunt in their pockets; for you seem to have already found out that your face is your fortune, Alley. Come, make haste; we must be starting. I shall come up for you in ten minutes. Pish! don't be faint-hearted; here, take 'Old Tom,'—take it, I say. What, you won't? Well, here's to your health, and a better taste to you!"

And now, as the door once more closed upon Darvil, tears for the first time came to the relief of Alice. It was a woman's weakness that procured for her that woman's luxury. Those garments,—they were Ernest's gift, Ernest's taste; they were like the last relic of that delicious life which now seemed to have fled forever. All traces of that life,—of him, the loving, the protecting, the adored; all trace of herself, as she had been re-created by love, was to be lost to her forever. It was—as she had read somewhere, in the little elementary volumes that bounded her historic lore—like that last fatal ceremony in which those condemned for life to the mines of Siberia are clothed with the slave's livery, their past name and record eternally blotted out, and thrust into the vast wastes from which even the mercy of despotism, should it ever re-awaken, cannot recall them; for all evidence of them, all individuality, all mark to distinguish them from the universal herd, is expunged from the world's calendar. She was still sobbing in vehement and unrestrained passion, when Darvil re-entered. "What, not dressed yet?" he exclaimed, in a voice of impatient rage. "Hark ye, this won't do. If in two minutes you are not ready, I'll send up John Walters to help you; and he is a rough hand, I can tell you."

This threat recalled Alice to herself. "I will do as you wish," said she, meekly.

"Well, then, be quick," said Darvil; "they are now put-

ting the horse to. And mark me, girl, your father is running away from the gallows; and that thought does not make a man stand upon scruples. If you once attempt to give me the slip, or do or say anything that can bring the bulkies upon us, by the devil in hell,—if indeed there be hell or devil,—my knife shall become better acquainted with that throat; so look to it!”

And this was the father, this the condition, of her whose ear had for months drunk no other sound than the whispers of flattering love,—the murmurs of Passion from the lips of Poetry!

They continued their journey till midnight; they then arrived at an inn little different from the last,—but here Alice was no longer consigned to solitude. In a long room, reeking with smoke, sat from twenty to thirty ruffians before a table on which mugs and vessels of strong potations were formidably interspersed with sabres and pistols. They received Walters and Darvil with a shout of welcome, and would have crowded somewhat uncereemoniously round Alice, if her father, whose well-known desperate and brutal ferocity made him a man to be respected in such an assembly, had not said sternly: “Hands off, messmates, and make way by the fire for my little girl,—she is meat for your masters.”

So saying, he pushed Alice down into a huge chair in the chimney-nook, and, seating himself near her at the end of the table, hastened to turn the conversation.

“Well, Captain,” said he, addressing a small, thin man at the head of the table, “I and Walters have fairly cut and run; the land has a bad air for us, and we now want the sea-breeze to cure the rope-fever. So, knowing this was your night, we have crowded sail, and here we are. You must give the girl there a lift, though I know you don’t like such lumber, and we’ll run ashore as soon as we can.”

“She seems a quiet little body,” replied the captain; “and we would do more than that to oblige an old friend like you. In half an hour Oliver¹ puts on his nightcap, and we must then be off.”

¹ The moon.

"The sooner the better."

The men now appeared to forget the presence of Alice, who sat faint with fatigue and exhaustion,—for she had been too sick at heart to touch the food brought to her at their previous halting-place,—gazing abstractedly upon the fire. Her father before their departure made her swallow some morsels of sea-biscuit, though each seemed to choke her; and then, wrapped in a thick boat-cloak, she was placed in a small well-built cutter; and as the sea-winds whistled round her, the present cold and the past fatigues lulled her miserable heart into the arms of the charitable Sleep.

CHAPTER II.

You are once more a free woman ;

Here I discharge your bonds.

The Custom of the Country.

AND many were thy trials, poor child; many that, were this book to germinate into volumes more numerous than monk ever composed upon the lives of saint or martyr,—though a hundred volumes contained the record of two years only in the life of Saint Anthony,—it would be impossible to describe! We may talk of the fidelity of books, but no man ever wrote even his own biography without being compelled to omit at least nine tenths of the most important materials. What are three, what six volumes? We live six volumes in a day! Thought, emotion, joy, sorrow, hope, fear,—how prolix would they be if they might each tell their hourly tale! But man's life itself is a brief epitome of that which is infinite and everlasting; and his most accurate confessions are a miserable abridgment of a hurried and confused compendium!

It was about three months or more from the night in which Alice wept herself to sleep amongst those wild companions, when she contrived to escape from her father's vigilant eye. They were then on the coast of Ireland. Darvil had separated himself from Walters, from his seafaring companions; he had run through the greater part of the money his crimes had got together; he began seriously to attempt putting into execution his horrible design of depending for support upon the sale of his daughter. Now, Alice might have been molded into sinful purposes before she knew Maltravers; but from that hour her very error made her virtuous,—she had comprehended, the moment she loved, what was meant by female honour; and by a sudden revelation she had purchased modesty, delicacy of thought and soul, in the sacrifice of herself. Much of our morality (prudent and right upon system) with respect to the first false step of women leads us, as we all know, into barbarous errors as to individual exceptions. Where from pure and confiding love that first false step has been taken, many a woman has been saved in after life from a thousand temptations. The poor unfortunates who crowd our streets and theatres have rarely in the first instance been corrupted by love, but by poverty, and the contagion of circumstance and example. It is a miserable cant phrase to call them the victims of seduction,—they have been the victims of hunger, of vanity, of curiosity, of evil *female* counsels; but the seduction of love hardly ever conducts to a *life* of vice. If a woman has once really loved, the beloved object makes an impenetrable barrier between her and other men; their advances terrify and revolt,—she would rather die than be unfaithful even to a memory. Though man loves the sex, woman loves only the individual; and the more she loves him, the more cold she is to the species. For the passion of woman is in the sentiment, the fancy, the heart. It rarely has much to do with the coarse images with which boys and old men — the inexperienced and the worn-out — connect it.

But Alice, though her blood ran cold at her terrible father's language, saw in his very design the prospect of escape. In an hour of drunkenness he thrust her from the house and sta-

tioned himself to watch her; it was in the city of Cork. She formed her resolution instantly,—turned up a narrow street, and fled at full speed. Darvil endeavoured in vain to keep pace with her, his eyes dizzy, his steps reeling with intoxication. She heard his last curse dying from a distance on the air, and her fear winged her steps; she paused at last, and found herself on the outskirts of the town. She paused, overcome, and deadly faint; and then, for the first time, she felt that a strange and new life was stirring within her own. She had long since known that she bore in her womb the unborn offspring of Maltravers, and that knowledge had made her struggle and live on. But now the embryo had quickened into being; it moved, it appealed to her,—a thing unseen, unknown; but still it was a living creature appealing to a mother! Oh, the thrill, half of ineffable tenderness, half of mysterious terror, at that moment! What a new chapter in the life of woman did it not announce! Now, then, she must be watchful over herself,—must guard against fatigue, must wrestle with despair. Solemn was the trust committed to her,—the life of another, the child of the Adored! It was a summer night; she sat on a rude stone, the city on one side, with its lights and lamps,—the whitened fields beyond, with the moon and the stars above; and *above* she raised her streaming eyes, and she thought that God the Protector smiled upon her from the face of the sweet skies. So, after a pause and a silent prayer, she rose and resumed her way. When she was wearied she crept into a shed in a farmyard, and slept, for the first time for weeks, the calm sleep of security and hope.

CHAPTER III.

How like a prodigal doth she return,
With over-weathered ribs and ragged sails.

Merchant of Venice.

Mer. What are these ?

Uncle. The tenants.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER: *Wit without Money.*

It was just two years from the night in which Alice had been torn from the cottage, and at that time Maltravers was wandering amongst the ruins of ancient Egypt, when, upon the very lawn where Alice and her lover had so often loitered hand in hand, a gay party of children and young people were assembled. The cottage had been purchased by an opulent and retired manufacturer. He had raised the low thatched roof another story high, and blue slate had replaced the thatch; and the pretty verandas overgrown with creepers had been taken down, because Mrs. Hobbs thought they gave the rooms a dull look; and the little rustic doorway had been replaced by four Ionic pillars in stucco; and a new dining-room, twenty-two feet by eighteen, had been built out at one wing, and a new drawing-room had been built over the new dining-room. And the poor little cottage looked quite grand and villa-like. The fountain had been taken away, because it made the house damp; and there was such a broad carriage-drive from the gate to the house! The gate was no longer the modest green wooden gate, ever ajar with its easy latch, but a tall, cast-iron, well-locked gate, between two pillars to match the porch. And on one of the gates was a brass-plate, on which was graven, "Hobbs Lodge. Ring the bell." The lesser Hobbses and the bigger Hobbses were all on the lawn, — many of them fresh from school; for it was the half-holiday of a Saturday afternoon. There was mirth and noise and

shouting and whooping, and the respectable old couple looked calmly on, Hobbs the father smoking his pipe (alas, it was not the dear meerschaum!); Hobbs the mother talking to her eldest daughter (a fine young woman, three months married, for love, to a poor man) upon the proper number of days that a leg of mutton (weight ten pounds) should be made to last.

"Always, my dear, have large joints,—they are much the most saving. Let me see— What a noise the boys do make! No, my love, the ball's not here."

"Mamma, it is under your petticoats."

"La, child, how naughty you are!"

"Holla, you sir! it's my turn to go in now. Biddy, wait! Girls have no innings; girls only fag out."

"Bob, you cheat."

"Pa, Ned says I cheat."

"Very likely, my dear; you are to be a lawyer."

"Where was I, my dear?" resumed Mrs Hobbs, resettling herself and readjusting the invaded petticoats. "Oh, about the leg of mutton. Yes, large joints are the best. The second day a nice hash, with dumplings; the third, broil the bone, —your husband is sure to like broiled bones,—and then keep the scraps for Saturday's pie. You know, my dear, your father and I were worse off than you when we began; but now we have everything that is handsome about us,—nothing like management. Saturday pies are very nice things, and then you start clear with your joint on Sunday. A good wife like you should never neglect the Saturday's pie!"

"Yes," said the bride, mournfully; "but Mr. Tiddy does not like pies."

"Not like pies! That's very odd,—Mr. Hobbs likes pies. Perhaps you don't have the crust made thick eno'. However, you can make it up to him with a pudding. A wife should always study her husband's tastes: what is a man's home without love? Still, a husband ought not to be aggravating, and dislike pie on a Saturday!"

"Holla! I say, Ma, do you see that 'ere gypsy? I shall go and have my fortune told."

"And I, and I!"

"Lor', if there be n't a tramper!" cried Mr. Hobbs, rising indignantly. "What can the parish be about?"

The object of these latter remarks, filial and paternal, was a young woman in a worn, threadbare cloak, with her face pressed to the open-work of the gate, and looking wistfully — oh, how wistfully! — within. The children eagerly ran up to her; but they involuntarily slackened their steps when they drew near, for she was evidently not what they had taken her for. No gypsy hues darkened the pale, thin, delicate cheek; no gypsy leer lurked in those large, blue, and streaming eyes; no gypsy effrontery bronzed that candid and childish brow. As she thus pressed her countenance with convulsive eagerness against the cold bars, the young people caught the contagion of inexpressible and half-fearful sadness; they approached almost respectfully. "Do you want anything here?" said the eldest and boldest of the boys.

"I — I — Surely this is Dale Cottage?"

"It was Dale Cottage, it is Hobbs Lodge now. Can't you read?" said the heir of the Hobbs's honours, losing, in contempt at the girl's ignorance, his first impression of sympathy.

"And — and — Mr. Butler, is he gone *too*?"

Poor child! she spoke as if the cottage was gone, not improved; the Ionic portico had no charm for her!

"Butler! No such person lives here. Pa, do you know where Mr. Butler lives?"

Pa was now moving up to the place of conference the slow artillery of his fair round belly and portly calves. "Butler, no; I know nothing of such a name. No Mr. Butler lives here. Go along with you, — ain't you ashamed to beg?"

"No Mr. Butler!" said the girl, gasping for breath, and clinging to the gate for support. "Are you sure, sir?"

"Sure, yes! What do you want with him?"

"Oh, Papa, she looks faint!" said one of the *girls*, deprecatingly. "Do let her have something to eat, — I'm sure she's hungry."

Mr. Hobbs looked angry; he had often been taken in, and no rich man likes beggars. Generally speaking, the rich man is in the right. But then Mr. Hobbs turned to the suspected

tramper's sorrowful face, and then to his fair, pretty child; and his good angel whispered something to Mr. Hobbs's heart, and he said, after a pause: "Heaven forbid that we should not feel for a poor fellow-creature not so well to do as ourselves. Come in, my lass, and have a morsel to eat."

The girl did not seem to hear him, and he repeated the invitation, approaching to unlock the gate.

"No, sir," said she, then; "no, I thank you. I could not come in now. I could not eat *here*. But tell me, sir, I implore you, can you not even guess where I may find Mr. Butler?"

"Butler!" said Mrs. Hobbs, whom curiosity had now drawn to the spot. "I remember that was the name of the gentleman who hired the place, and was robbed."

"Robbed!" said Mr. Hobbs, falling back and re-locking the gate; "and the new tea-pot just come home," he muttered inly. "Come, be off, child, be off; we know nothing of your Mr. Butlers."

The young woman looked wildly in his face, cast a hurried glance over the altered spot, and then, with a kind of shiver, as if the wind had smitten her delicate form too rudely, she drew her cloak more closely round her shoulders, and without saying another word, moved away. The party looked after her as, with trembling steps, she passed down the road, and all felt that pang of shame which is common to the human heart at the sight of a distress it has not sought to soothe. But this feeling vanished at once from the breast of Mrs. and Mr. Hobbs when they saw the girl stop where a turn of the road brought the gate before her eyes, and for the first time they perceived, what the worn cloak had hitherto concealed, that the poor young thing bore an infant in her arms. She halted, she gazed fondly back. Even at that distance the despair of her eyes was visible; and then, as she pressed her lips to the infant's brow, they heard a convulsive sob, they saw her turn away, and she was gone!

"Well, I declare!" said Mrs. Hobbs.

"News for the parish," said Mr. Hobbs; "and she so young too! What a shame!"

"The girls about here are very bad, nowadays, Jenny," said the mother to the bride.

"I see now why she wanted Mr. Butler," quoth Hobbs, with a knowing wink,— "the slut has come to swear!"

And it was for this that Alice had supported her strength, her courage, during the sharp pangs of childbirth, during a severe and crushing illness, which for months after her confinement had stretched her upon a peasant's bed (the object of the rude but kindly charity of an Irish shealing); for this, day after day, she had whispered to herself, "I shall get well, and I will beg my way to the cottage, and find him there still, and put my little one into his arms, and all will be bright again;" for this, as soon as she could walk without aid, had she set out on foot from the distant land; for this, almost with a dog's instinct (for she knew not what way to turn, what county the cottage was placed in,— she only knew the name of the neighbouring town, and that, populous as it was, sounded strange to the ears of those she asked; and she had often and often been directed wrong),— for this, I say, almost with a dog's faithful instinct, had she, in cold and heat, in hunger and in thirst, tracked to her old master's home her desolate and lonely way! And thrice had she over-fatigued herself, and thrice again been indebted to humble pity for a bed whereon to lay a feverish and broken frame. And once, too, her baby — her darling, her life of life — had been ill, had been near unto death, and she could not stir till the infant (it was a girl) was well again, and could smile in her face and crow. And thus many, many months had elapsed since the day she set out on her pilgrimage, to that on which she found its goal. But never, save when the child was ill, had she desponded or abated heart and hope. She should see him again, and he would kiss her child. And now — No, I cannot paint the might of that stunning blow! She knew not, she dreamed not, of the kind precautions Maltravers had taken; and he had not sufficiently calculated on her thorough ignorance of the world. How could she divine that the magistrate, not a mile distant from her, could have told her all she sought to know? Could she but have met the gardener,

or the old woman-servant, all would have been well! These last, indeed, she had the forethought to ask for; but the woman was dead, and the gardener had taken a strange service in some distant county. And so died her last gleam of hope. If one person who remembered the search of Maltravers had but met and recognized her! But she had been seen by so few, and now the bright, fresh girl was so sadly altered! Her race was not yet run, and many a sharp wind upon the mournful seas had the bark to brave before its haven was found at last.

CHAPTER IV.

PATIENCE and sorrow strove
Which should express her goodliest. — SHAKESPEARE.

*Je la plains, je la blame, et je suis son appui.*¹ — VOLTAIRE.

AND now Alice felt that she was on the wide world alone, with her child, no longer to be protected, but to protect; and after the first few days of agony, a new spirit, not indeed of hope, but of endurance, passed within her. Her solitary wanderings, with God her only guide, had tended greatly to elevate and confirm her character. She felt a strong reliance on His mysterious mercy; she felt, too, the responsibility of a mother. Thrown for so many months upon her own resources, even for the bread of life, her intellect was unconsciously sharpened, and a habit of patient fortitude had strengthened a nature originally clinging and femininely soft. She resolved to pass into some other county, for she could neither bear the thoughts that haunted the neighbourhood around, nor think, without a loathing horror, of the possibility of her father's return. Accordingly, one day she renewed her wanderings, and after a week's travel arrived at a small village. Charity is so common in England, it so spontaneously springs up

¹ "I pity her, I blame her, and am her support."

everywhere, like the good seed by the roadside, that she had rarely wanted the bare necessities of existence. And her humble manner, and sweet, well-tuned voice, so free from the professional whine of mendicancy, had usually its charm for the sternest. So she generally obtained enough to buy bread and a night's lodging; and if sometimes she failed, she could bear hunger, and was not afraid of creeping into some shed, or, when by the sea-shore, even into some sheltering cavern. Her child throve too, for God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb! But now, so far as physical privation went the worst was over.

It so happened that as Alice was drawing herself wearily along to the entrance of the village which was to bound her day's journey she was met by a lady, past middle age, in whose countenance compassion was so visible that Alice would not beg; for she had a strange delicacy, or pride, or whatever it may be called, and rather begged of the stern than of those who looked kindly at her,—she did not like to lower herself in the eyes of the last.

The lady stopped.

"My poor girl, where are you going?"

"Where God pleases, madam," said Alice.

"Humph! and is that your own child?—you are almost a child yourself."

"It is mine, madam," said Alice, gazing fondly at the infant; "it is my all!"

The lady's voice faltered. "Are you married?" she asked.

"Married? Oh, no, madam!" replied Alice, innocently, yet without blushing; for she never knew that she had done wrong in loving Maltravers.

The lady drew gently back, but not in horror,—no, in still deeper compassion; for that lady had true virtue, and she knew that the faults of her sex are sufficiently punished to permit Virtue to pity them without a sin.

"I am sorry for it," she said, however, with greater gravity.

"Are you travelling to seek the father?"

"Ah, madam! I shall never see him again!" And Alice wept.

"What, he has abandoned you! — So young, so beautiful!" added the lady to herself.

"Abandoned me? No, madam; but it is a long tale. Good evening; I thank you kindly for your pity."

The lady's eyes ran over.

"Stay," said she; "tell me frankly where you are going, and what is your object."

"Alas! madam, I am going anywhere, for I have no home; but I wish to live, and work for my living, in order that my child may not want for anything. I wish I could maintain myself,—*he* used to say I could."

"He! Your language and manner are not those of a peasant. What can you do? What do you know?"

"Music and work and — and —"

"Music! This is strange! What were your parents?"

Alice shuddered, and hid her face with her hands.

The lady's interest was now fairly warmed in her behalf.

"She has sinned," said she to herself; "but at that age, how can one be harsh? She must not be thrown upon the world to make sin a habit.— Follow me," she said, after a little pause, "and think you have found a friend."

The lady then turned from the high-road down a green lane which led to a park lodge. This lodge she entered; and after a short conversation with the inmate, beckoned to Alice to join her.

"Janet," said Alice's new protector to a comely and pleasant-eyed woman, "this is the young person; you will show her and the infant every attention. I shall send down proper clothing for her to-morrow, and I shall then have thought what will be best for her future welfare."

With that the lady smiled benignly upon Alice, whose heart was too full to speak; and the door of the cottage closed upon her, and Alice thought the day had grown darker.

CHAPTER V.

BELIEVE me, she has won me much to pity her.
 Alas! her gentle nature was not made
 To buffet with adversity. — ROWE.

Sober he was, and grave from early youth,
 Mindful of forms, but more intent on truth;
 In a light drab he uniformly dressed,
 And look serene th' unruffled mind expressed.

Yet might observers in his sparkling eye
 Some observation, some acuteness, spy,—
 The friendly thought it keen, the treacherous deemed it sly;
 Yet not a crime could foe or friend detect.
 His actions all were, like his speech, correct.
 Chaste, sober, solemn, and devout they named
 Him who was this, and not of *this* ashamed. — CRABBE.

I'll on, and sound this secret. — BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

MRS. LESLIE, the lady introduced to the reader in the last chapter, was a woman of the firmest intellect combined — no unusual combination — with the softest heart. She learned Alice's history with admiration and pity. The natural innocence and honesty of the young mother spoke so eloquently in her words and looks that Mrs. Leslie, on hearing her tale, found much less to forgive than she had anticipated. Still, she deemed it necessary to enlighten Alice as to the criminality of the connection she had formed. But here Alice was singularly dull; she listened in meek patience to Mrs. Leslie's lecture, but it evidently made but slight impression on her. She had not yet seen enough of the social state to correct the first impressions of the natural; and all she could say in answer to Mrs. Leslie was: "It may be all very true, madam, but I have been so much better since I knew him!"

But though Alice took humbly any censure upon herself, she would not hear a syllable insinuated against Maltravers.

When, in a very natural indignation, Mrs. Leslie denounced him as a destroyer of innocence,—for Mrs. Leslie could not learn all that extenuated his offence,—Alice started up, with flashing eyes and heaving heart, and would have hurried from the only shelter she had in the wide world; she would sooner have died, she would sooner even have seen her child die, than have done that idol of her soul, who in her eyes stood alone on some pinnacle between earth and heaven, the wrong of hearing him reviled. With difficulty Mrs. Leslie could restrain, with still more difficulty could she pacify and soothe her; and for the girl's petulance, which others might have deemed insolent or ungrateful, the woman-heart of Mrs. Leslie loved her all the better. The more she saw of Alice, and the more she comprehended her story and her character, the more was she lost in wonder at the romance of which this beautiful child had been the heroine, and the more perplexed she was as to Alice's future prospects.

At length, however, when she became acquainted with Alice's musical acquirements, which were, indeed, of no common order, a light broke in upon her. Here was the source of her future independence. Maltravers, it will be remembered, was a musician of consummate skill as well as taste, and Alice's natural talent for the art had advanced her in the space of months to a degree of perfection which it cost others—which it had cost even the quick Maltravers—years to obtain. But we learn so rapidly when our teachers are those we love; and it may be observed that the less our knowledge, the less, perhaps, our genius, in other things, the more facile are our attainments in music, which is a very jealous mistress of the mind. Mrs. Leslie resolved to have her perfected in this art, and so enable her to become a teacher to others. In the town of C—, about thirty miles from Mrs. Leslie's house, though in the same county, there was no inconsiderable circle of wealthy and intelligent persons; for it was a cathedral town, and the resident clergy drew around them a kind of provincial aristocracy. Here, as in most rural towns in England, music was much cultivated, both among the higher and middle classes. There were amateur concerts

and glee-clubs and subscriptions for sacred music; and once every five years there was the great C—— Festival. In this town Mrs. Leslie established Alice; she placed her under the roof of a *ci-devant* music-master, who, having retired from his profession, was no longer jealous of rivals, but who by handsome terms was induced to complete the education of Alice. It was an eligible and comfortable abode, and the music-master and his wife were a good-natured, easy old couple.

Three months of resolute and unceasing perseverance, combined with the singular ductility and native gifts of Alice, sufficed to render her the most promising pupil the good musician had ever accomplished; and in three months more, introduced by Mrs. Leslie to many of the families in the place, Alice was established in a home of her own; and what with regular lessons, and occasional assistance at musical parties, she was fairly earning what her tutor reasonably pronounced to be “a very genteel independence.”

Now, in these arrangements (for we must here go back a little) there had been one gigantic difficulty, of conscience in one party, of feeling in another, to surmount. Mrs. Leslie saw at once that unless Alice’s misfortune was concealed, all the virtues and all the talents in the world could not enable her to retrace the one false step. Mrs. Leslie was a woman of habitual truth and strict rectitude, and she was sorely perplexed between the propriety of candour and its cruelty. She felt unequal to take the responsibility of action on herself; and after much meditation she resolved to confide her scruples to one who, of all whom she knew, possessed the highest character for moral worth and religious sanctity. This gentleman, lately a widower, lived at the outskirts of the town selected for Alice’s future residence, and at that time happened to be on a visit in Mrs. Leslie’s neighbourhood. He was an opulent man, a banker; he had once represented the town in parliament, and retiring, from disinclination to the late hours and onerous fatigues even of an unreformed House of Commons, he still possessed an influence to return one, if not both, of the members for the city of C——. And that in-

fluence was always exerted so as best to secure his own interest with the powers that be, and advance certain objects of ambition (for he was both an ostentatious and ambitious man in his own way) which he felt he might more easily obtain by proxy than by his own votes and voice in parliament,—an atmosphere in which his light did not shine. And it was with a wonderful address that the banker contrived at once to support the Government, and yet, by the frequent expression of liberal opinions, to conciliate the Whigs and the Dissenters of his neighbourhood. Parties, political and sectarian, were not then so irreconcilable as they are now. In the whole county there was no one so respected as this eminent person; and yet he possessed no shining talents, though a laborious and energetic man of business. It was solely and wholly the force of moral character which gave him his position in society. He felt this; he was sensitively proud of it; he was painfully anxious not to lose an atom of a distinction that required to be vigilantly secured. He was a very *remarkable*, yet not, perhaps (could we penetrate all hearts), a very *uncommon*, character, this banker. He had risen from, comparatively speaking, a low origin and humble fortunes, and entirely by the scrupulous and sedate propriety of his outward conduct. With such a propriety he therefore inseparably connected every notion of worldly prosperity and honour. Thus, though far from a bad man, he was forced into being something of a hypocrite. Every year he had grown more starched and more saintly. He was conscience-keeper to the whole town; and it is astonishing how many persons hardly dared to make a will or subscribe to a charity without his advice. As he was a shrewd man of this world, as well as an accredited guide to the next, his advice was precisely of a nature to reconcile the Conscience and the Interest; and he was a kind of negotiator in the reciprocal diplomacy of earth and heaven. But our banker was really a charitable man and a benevolent man and a sincere believer. How, then, was he a hypocrite? Simply because he professed to be far *more* charitable, *more* benevolent, and *more* pious than he really was. His reputation had now arrived to that degree of im-

maculate polish that the smallest breath, which would not have tarnished the character of another man, would have fixed an indelible stain upon his. As he affected to be more strict than the Churchman, and was a great oracle with all who regarded Churchmen as lukewarm, so his conduct was narrowly watched by all the clergy of the orthodox cathedral,—good men, doubtless, but not affecting to be saints, who were jealous at being so luminously outshone by a layman and an authority of the sectarians. On the other hand, the intense homage and almost worship he received from his followers kept his goodness upon a stretch, if not beyond all human power, certainly beyond his own. For “admiration,” as it is well said somewhere, “is a kind of superstition which expects miracles.” From nature this gentleman had received an inordinate share of animal propensities; he had strong passions, he was by temperament a sensualist. He loved good eating and good wine; he loved women. The two former blessings of the carnal life are not incompatible with canonization; but Saint Anthony has shown that women, however angelic, are not precisely that order of angels that saints may safely commune with. If, therefore, he ever yielded to temptations of a sexual nature, it was with profound secrecy and caution; nor did his right hand know what his left hand did.

This gentleman had married a woman much older than himself; but her fortune had been one of the necessary stepping-stones in his career. His exemplary conduct towards this lady, ugly as well as old, had done much towards increasing the odour of his sanctity. She died of an ague, and the widower did not shock probabilities by affecting too severe a grief.

“The Lord’s will be done!” said he. “She was a good woman; but we should not set our affections too much upon His perishable creatures!”

This was all he was ever heard to say on the matter. He took an elderly gentlewoman, distantly related to him, to manage his house and sit at the head of the table; and it was thought not impossible, though the widower was past fifty, that he might marry again.

Such was the gentleman called in by Mrs. Leslie, who, of the same religious opinions, had long known and revered him, to decide the affairs of Alice and of Conscience.

As this man exercised no slight or fugitive influence over Alice Darvil's destinies, his counsels on the point in discussion ought to be fairly related.

"And now," said Mrs. Leslie, concluding the history, "you will perceive, my dear sir, that this poor young creature has been less culpable than she appears. From the extraordinary proficiency she has made in music in a time that by her own account seems incredibly short, I should suspect her unprincipled betrayer must have been an artist, — a professional man. It is just possible that they may meet again and (as the ranks between them cannot be so very disproportionate) that he may marry her. I am sure that he could not do a better or a wiser thing, for she loves him too fondly, despite her wrongs. Under these circumstances would it be a — a — a culpable disguise of truth to represent her as a married woman, separated from her husband, and give her the name of her seducer? Without such a precaution you will see, sir, that all hope of settling her respectably in life, all chance of procuring her any creditable independence, is out of the question. Such is my dilemma. What is your advice? Palatable or not, I shall abide by it."

The banker's grave and saturnine countenance exhibited a slight degree of embarrassment at the case submitted to him. He began brushing away, with the cuff of his black coat, some atoms of dust that had settled on his drab small-clothes; and after a slight pause he replied: "Why, really, dear madam, the question is one of much delicacy, — I doubt if men could be good judges upon it; your sex's tact and instinct on these matters are better, much better, than our sagacity. There is much in the dictates of your own heart; for to those who are in the grace of the Lord, He vouchsafes to communicate His pleasure by spiritual hints and inward suggestions!"

"If so, my dear sir, the matter is decided; for my heart whispers me that this slight deviation from truth would be a less culpable offence than turning so young and, I had almost

said, so innocent a creature adrift upon the world. I may take your opinion as my sanction?"

"Why, really, I can scarcely say so much as that," said the banker, with a slight smile. "A deviation from truth cannot be incurred without some forfeiture of strict duty."

"Not in any case? Alas, I was afraid so!" said Mrs. Leslie, despondingly.

"In any case? Oh, there *may* be cases! But had I not better see the young woman, and ascertain that your benevolent heart has not deceived you?"

"I wish you would," said Mrs. Leslie; "she is now in the house. I will ring for her."

"Should we not be alone?"

"Certainly; I will leave you together."

Alice was sent for, and appeared.

"This pious gentleman," said Mrs. Leslie, "will confer with you for a few moments, my child. Do not be afraid; he is the best of men." With these words of encouragement the good lady vanished, and Alice saw before her a tall, dark man, with a head bald in front, yet larger behind than before, with spectacles upon a pair of shrewd, penetrating eyes, and an outline of countenance that showed he must have been handsome in earlier manhood.

"My young friend," said the banker, seating himself, after a deliberate survey of the fair countenance that blushed beneath his gaze, "Mrs. Leslie and myself have been conferring upon your temporal welfare. You have been unfortunate, my child."

"Ah, yes!"

"Well, well, you are very young; we must not be too severe upon youth. You will never do so again?"

"Do what, please you, sir?"

"What! Humph! I mean that you will be more rigid, more circumspect. Men are deceitful; you must be on your guard against them. You are handsome, child, very handsome,—more 's the pity." And the banker took Alice's hand and pressed it with great unction. Alice looked at him gravely, and drew her hand away instinctively.

The banker lowered his spectacles and gazed at her without their aid; his eyes were still fine and expressive. "What is your name?" he asked.

"Alice — Alice Darvil, sir."

"Well, Alice, we have been considering what is best for you. You wish to earn your own livelihood, and perhaps marry some honest man hereafter."

"Marry, sir? Never!" said Alice, with great earnestness, her eyes filling with tears.

"And why?"

"Because I shall never see *him* on earth, and they do not marry in heaven, sir."

The banker was moved, for he was not worse than his neighbours, though trying to make them believe he was so much better.

"Well, time enough to talk of that; but in the meanwhile you would support yourself?"

"Yes, sir. His child ought to be a burden to none,—nor I either. I once wished to die; but then who would love my little one? *Now* I wish to live."

"But what mode of livelihood would you prefer? Would you go into a family in some capacity? Not that of a servant,—you are too delicate for that."

"Oh, no, no!"

"But, again, why?" asked the banker, soothingly, yet surprised.

"Because," said Alice, almost solemnly, "there are some hours when I feel I must be alone. I sometimes think I am not all right *here*," and she touched her forehead. "They called me an idiot before I knew *him*! No, I could not live with others, for I can only cry when nobody but my child is with me."

This was said with such unconscious, and therefore with such pathetic, simplicity that the banker was sensibly affected. He rose, stirred the fire, resettled himself, and after a pause said emphatically: "Alice, I will be your friend. Let me believe you will deserve it."

Alice bent her graceful head; and seeing that he had sunk

into an abstracted silence, she thought it time for her to withdraw.

"She is indeed beautiful," said the banker, almost aloud, when he was alone; "and the old lady is right, — she is as innocent as if she had not fallen. I wonder —" Here he stopped short, and walked to the glass over the mantelpiece, where he was still gazing on his own features when Mrs. Leslie returned.

"Well, sir?" said she, a little surprised at this seeming vanity in so pious a man.

The banker started. "Madam, I honour your penetration as much as your charity; I think that there is so much to be feared in letting all the world know this young female's past error that, though I dare not advise, I cannot blame, your concealment of it."

"But, sir, your words have sunk deep into my thoughts; you said every deviation from truth was a forfeiture of duty."

"Certainly; but there are some exceptions. The world is a bad world, — we are born in sin, and the children of wrath. We do not tell infants all the truth when they ask us questions, the proper answers of which would mislead, not enlighten, them. In some things the whole world are infants. The very science of government is the science of concealing truth; so is the system of trade. We could not blame the tradesman for not telling the public that if all his debts were called in he would be a bankrupt."

"And he may marry her, after all, this Mr. Butler."

"Heaven forbid, — the villain! Well, madam, I will see to this poor young thing; she shall not want a guide."

"Heaven reward you! How wicked some people are to call you severe!"

"I can bear *that* blame with a meek temper, madam. Good-day."

"Good-day. You will remember how strictly confidential has been our conversation."

"Not a breath shall transpire. I will send you some tracts to-morrow, — so comforting. Heaven bless you!"

This difficulty smoothed, Mrs. Leslie, to her astonishment, found that she had another to contend with in Alice herself. For, first, Alice conceived that to change her name and keep her secret was to confess that she ought to be ashamed rather than proud of her love to Ernest, and she thought that so ungrateful to him; and, secondly, to take his name, to pass for his wife — what presumption! He would certainly have a right to be offended! At these scruples Mrs. Leslie well-nigh lost all patience; and the banker, to his own surprise, was again called in. We have said that he was an experienced and skilful adviser, — which implies the faculty of persuasion. He soon saw the handle by which Alice's obstinacy might always be moved, — her little girl's welfare. He put this so forcibly before her eyes; he represented the child's future fate as resting so much, not only on her own good conduct, but on her outward respectability, that he prevailed upon her at last; and perhaps one argument that he incidentally used had as much effect on her as the rest. "This Mr. Butler, if yet in England, may pass through our town, may visit amongst us, may hear you spoken of by a name similar to his own, and curiosity would thus induce him to seek you. Take his name, and you will always bear an honourable index to your mutual discovery and recognition. Besides, when you are respectable, honoured, and earning an independence, he may not be too proud to marry you. But take your own name, avow your own history, and not only will your child be an outcast, yourself a beggar, or, at best, a menial dependent, but you lose every hope of recovering the object of your too-devoted attachment."

Thus Alice was convinced. From that time she became close and reserved in her communications. Mrs. Leslie had wisely selected a town sufficiently remote from her own abode to preclude any revelations of her domestics; and as Mrs. Butler, Alice attracted universal sympathy and respect from the exercise of her talents, the modest sweetness of her manners, the unblemished propriety of her conduct. Somehow or other, no sooner did she learn the philosophy of concealment than she made a great leap in knowledge of the world. And

though flattered and courted by the young loungers of C——, she steered her course with so much address that she was never persecuted; for there are few men in the world who make advances where there is no encouragement.

The banker observed her conduct with silent vigilance. He met her often, he visited her often. He was intimate at houses where she attended to teach or perform. He lent her good books, he advised her, he preached to her. Alice began to look up to him, to like him, to consider him as a village girl in Catholic countries may consider a benevolent and kindly priest. And he — what was his object? At that time it is impossible to guess; he became thoughtful and abstracted.

One day an old maid and an old clergyman met in the High Street of C——.

“And how do you do, ma’am?” said the clergyman. “How is the rheumatism?”

“Better, thank you, sir. Any news?”

The clergyman smiled, and something hovered on his lips, which he suppressed.

“Were you,” the old maid resumed, “at Mrs. Macnab’s last night? Charming music!”

“Charming! How pretty that Mrs. Butler is! and how humble! Knows her station, — so unlike professional people.”

“Yes, indeed! What attention a certain banker paid her!”

“He! he! he! yes; he is very fatherly — very!”

“Perhaps he will marry again; he is always talking of the holy state of matrimony. A holy state it may be, but Heaven knows his wife, poor woman, did not make it a pleasant one.”

“There may be more causes for that than we guess of,” said the clergyman, mysteriously. “I would not be uncharitable, but —”

“But what?”

“Oh, when he was young, our great man was not so correct, I fancy, as he is now.”

“So I have heard it whispered; but nothing against him was ever known.”

“Hem, it is very odd!”

"What's very odd?"

"Why,— but it's a secret; I dare say it's all very right."

"Oh, I sha'n't say a word. Are you going to the cathedral? Don't let me keep you standing. Now, pray proceed!"

"Well, then, yesterday I was doing duty in a village more than twenty miles hence, and I loitered in the village to take an early dinner; and, afterwards, while my horse was feeding, I strolled down the green."

"Well, well?"

"And I saw a gentleman muffled carefully up, with his hat slouched over his face, at the door of a cottage, with a little child in his arms; and he kissed it more fondly than, be we ever so good, we generally kiss other people's children; and then he gave it to a peasant woman standing near him, and mounted his horse, which was tied to the gate, and trotted past me. And who do you think this was?"

"Patience me, I can't guess!"

"Why, our saintly banker! I bowed to him, and I assure you he turned as red, ma'am, as your waistband."

"My!"

"I just turned into the cottage when he was out of sight, for I was thirsty, and asked for a glass of water; and I saw the child. I declare I would not be uncharitable, but I thought it monstrous like — you know whom!"

"Gracious! you don't say —"

"I asked the woman if it was hers; and she said 'No,' but was very short."

"Dear me, I *must* find this out! What is the name of the village?"

"Covedale."

"Oh, I know, I know!"

"Not a word of this; I dare say there is nothing in it. But I am not much in favour of your new lights."

"Nor I neither. What better than the good old Church of England?"

"Madam, your sentiments do you honour. You'll be sure not to say anything of our little mystery?"

"Not a syllable."

Two days after this, three old maids made an excursion to the village of Covedale, and lo! the cottage in question was shut up, the woman and the child were gone. The people in the village knew nothing about them, had seen nothing particular in the woman or child,—had always supposed them mother and daughter; and the gentleman identified by the clerical inquisitor with the banker had never but once been observed in the place.

“The vile old parson,” said the eldest of the old maids, “to take away so good a man’s character! and the fly will cost one pound two, with the baiting!”



CHAPTER VI.

IN this disposition was I when, looking out of my window one day to take the air, I perceived a kind of peasant who looked at me very attentively.

Gil Blas.

A SUMMER’S evening in a retired country town has something melancholy in it. You have the streets of a metropolis without their animated bustle; you have the stillness of the country without its birds and flowers. The reader will please to bring before him a quiet street in the quiet country town of C——, in a quiet evening in quiet June; the picture is not mirthful. Two young dogs are playing in the street; one old dog is watching by a newly painted door. A few ladies of middle age move noiselessly along the pavement, returning home to tea; they wear white muslin dresses, green spencers a little faded, straw poke bonnets with green or coffee-coloured gauze veils. By twos and threes they have disappeared within the thresholds of small, neat houses, with little railings enclosing little green plots,—threshold, house, railing, and plot each as like to the other as are those small commodities called “nest-tables,” which, “even as a broken mirror multiplies,”

summon to the bewildered eye countless iterations of one four-legged individual. Paradise Place was a set of nest-houses.

A cow had passed through the streets with a milkwoman behind; two young and gay shopmen, "looking after the gals," had reconnoitred the street, and vanished in despair. The twilight advanced, but gently; and though a star or two were up, the air was still clear. At the open window of one of the tenements in this street sat Alice Darvil. She had been working (that pretty excuse to women for thinking); and as the thoughts grew upon her, and the evening waned, the work had fallen upon her knee, and her hands dropped mechanically on her lap. Her profile was turned towards the street; but without moving her head or changing her attitude, her eyes glanced from time to time to her little girl, who, nestled on the ground beside her, tired with play, and wondering, perhaps, why she was not already in bed, seemed as tranquil as the young mother herself. And sometimes Alice's eyes filled with tears; and then she sighed, as if to sigh the tears away. But, poor Alice, if she grieved, hers was now a silent and a patient grief.

The street was deserted of all other passengers when a man passed along the pavement on the side opposite to Alice's house. His garb was rude and homely, between that of a labourer and a farmer; but still there was an affectation of tawdry show about the bright scarlet silk handkerchief, tied in a sailor or smuggler fashion round the sinewy throat; the hat was set jauntily on one side, and, dangling many an inch from the gayly striped waistcoat, glittered a watch-chain and seals which appeared suspiciously out of character with the rest of his attire. The passenger was covered with dust; and as the street was in a suburb communicating with the high-road, and formed one of the entrances into the town, he had probably, after a long day's journey, reached his evening's destination. The looks of this stranger were anxious, restless, and perturbed. In his gait and swagger there was the recklessness of the professional blackguard; but in his vigilant, prying, suspicious eyes there was a hang-dog expression of apprehension and fear. He seemed a man upon whom Crime had

set its significant mark, and who saw a purse with one eye and a gibbet with the other. Alice did not note the stranger until she herself had attracted and centred all his attention. He halted abruptly as he caught a view of her face, shaded his eyes with his hands as if to gaze more intently, and at length burst into an exclamation of surprise and pleasure. At that instant Alice turned, and her gaze met that of the stranger. The fascination of the basilisk can scarcely more stun and paralyze its victim than the look of this stranger charmed, with the appalling glamour of horror, the eye and soul of Alice Darvil. Her face became suddenly locked and rigid, her lips as white as marble, her eyes almost started from their sockets, she pressed her hands convulsively together, and shuddered, but still she did not move. The man nodded and grinned, and then, deliberately crossing the street, gained the door and knocked loudly. Still Alice did not stir; her senses seemed to have forsaken her. Presently the stranger's loud, rough voice was heard below, in answer to the accents of the solitary woman-servant whom Alice kept in her employ; and his strong, heavy tread made the slight staircase creak and tremble. Then Alice rose as by an instinct, caught her child in her arms, and stood erect and motionless, facing the door. It opened; and the FATHER and DAUGHTER were once more face to face within the same walls.

"Well, Alley, how are you, my blowen? Glad to see your old dad again, I'll be sworn. No ceremony, sit down! Ha, ha! snug here, very snug; we shall live together charmingly. Trade on your own account, eh? sly! Well, can't desert your poor old father. Let's have something to eat and drink."

So saying, Darvil threw himself at length upon the neat, prim, little chintz sofa, with the air of a man resolved to make himself perfectly at home.

Alice gazed, and trembled violently, but still said nothing; the power of voice had indeed left her.

"Come, why don't you stir your stumps? I suppose I must wait on myself. Fine manners! But, ho, ho,—a bell, by gosh! Mighty grand! Never mind; I am used to call for my own wants."

A hearty tug at the frail bell-rope sent a shrill alarm half-way through the long lath-and-plaster row of Paradise Place, and left the instrument of the sound in the hand of its creator.

Up came the maid-servant, a formal old woman, most respectable.

"Hark ye, old girl!" said Darvil, "bring up the best you have to eat,—not particular; let there be plenty. And I say, a bottle of brandy. Come, don't stand there staring like a stuck pig. Budge! Hell and furies! don't you hear me?"

The servant retreated, as if a pistol had been put to her head; and Darvil, laughing loud, threw himself again upon the sofa. Alice looked at him, and, still without saying a word, glided from the room, her child in her arms. She hurried downstairs, and in the hall met her servant. The latter, who was much attached to her mistress, was alarmed to see her about to leave the house.

"Why, marm, where be you going? Dear heart, you have no bonnet on! What is the matter? Who is this?"

"Oh!" cried Alice, in agony, "what shall I do? Where shall I fly?" The door above opened. Alice heard, started, and the next moment was in the street. She ran on breathlessly, and like one insane. Her mind was, indeed, for the time, gone; and had a river flowed before her way, she would have plunged into an escape from a world that seemed too narrow to hold a father and his child.

But just as she turned the corner of a street that led into the more public thoroughfares, she felt her arm grasped, and a voice called out her name in surprised and startled accents.

"Heavens, Mrs. Butler! Alice! What do I see? What is the matter?"

"Oh, sir, save me! You are a good man—a great man; save me,—he is returned!"

"He! who? Mr. Butler?" said the banker (for that gentleman it was), in a changed and trembling voice.

"No, no—ah, not he!—I did not say *he*, I said my father—my, my—ah—look behind—look behind—is he coming?"

"Calm yourself, my dear young friend, no one is near. I

will go and reason with your father. No one shall harm you; I will protect you. Go back, go back; I will follow, — we must not be seen together!" And the tall banker seemed trying to shrink into a nutshell.

"No, no," said Alice, growing yet paler; "I cannot go back."

"Well, then, just follow me to the door; your servant shall get you your bonnet, and accompany you to my house, where you can wait till I return. Meanwhile I will see your father, and rid you, I trust, of his presence."

The banker, who spoke in a very hurried and even impatient voice, waited for no reply, but took his way to Alice's house. Alice herself did not follow, but remained in the very place where she was left, till joined by her servant, who then conducted her to the rich man's residence. But Alice's mind had not recovered its shock, and her thoughts wandered alarmingly.

CHAPTER VII.

Miramont. Do they chafe roundly?

Andrew. As they were rubbed with soap, sir.

And now they swear aloud, now calm again

Like a ring of bells, whose sound the wind still utters;

And then they sit in council what to do,

And then they jar again what shall be done.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

OH! what a picture of human nature it was when the banker and the vagabond sat together in that little drawing-room facing each other, — one in the armchair, one on the sofa! Darvil was still employed on some cold meat, and was making wry faces at the very indifferent brandy which he had frightened the formal old servant into buying at the nearest public-house; and opposite sat the respectable, highly respectable, man of forms and ceremonies, of decencies and quackeries,

gazing gravely upon this low, dare-devil ruffian: the well-to-do hypocrite, the penniless villain; the man who had everything to lose,—the man who had nothing in the wide world but his own mischievous, rascally life, a gold watch, chain, and seals, which he had stolen the day before, and thirteen shillings and threepence halfpenny in his left breeches pocket!

The man of wealth was by no means well acquainted with the nature of the beast before him. He had heard from Mrs. Leslie (as we remember) the outline of Alice's history, and ascertained that their joint *protégée's* father was a great blackguard; but he expected to find Mr. Darvil a mere dull, brutish villain, a peasant-ruffian, a blunt serf, without brains, or their substitute, effrontery. But Luke Darvil was a clever, half-educated fellow; he did not sin from ignorance, but had wit enough to have bad principles, and he was as impudent as if he had lived all his life in the best society. He was not frightened at the banker's drab breeches and imposing air, not he! The Duke of Wellington would not have frightened Luke Darvil, unless his Grace had had the constables for his *aides-de-camp*.

The banker, to use a homely phrase, was "taken aback."

"Look you here, Mr. What's-your-name," said Darvil, swallowing a glass of the raw alcohol as if it had been water,—"look you now, you can't humbug me. What the devil do you care about my daughter's respectability, or comfort, or anything else, grave old dog as you are! It is my daughter herself you are licking your brown old chaps at! and, faith, my Alley is a very pretty girl, very; but queer as moonshine. You'll drive a much better bargain with me than with her."

The banker coloured scarlet; he bit his lips and measured his companion from head to foot, while the latter lolled on the sofa, as if he were meditating the possibility of kicking him downstairs. But Luke Darvil would have thrashed the banker and all his clerks into the bargain. His frame was like a trunk of thews and muscles packed up by that careful Dame Nature as tightly as possible; and a prize-fighter would have thought twice before he entered the ring against so awkward a customer. The banker was a man prudent to a

fault, and he pushed his chair six inches back as he concluded his survey.

"Sir," then said he, very quietly, "do not let us misunderstand each other. Your daughter is safe from your control; if you molest her, the law will protect —"

"She is not of age," said Darvil. "Your health, old boy!"

"Whether she is of age or not," returned the banker, unheeding the courtesy conveyed in the last sentence, "I do not care three straws; I know enough of the law to know that if she have rich friends in this town, and you have none, she will be protected and you will go to the treadmill."

"That is spoken like a sensible man," said Darvil, for the first time with a show of respect in his manner; "you now take a practical view of matters, as we used to say at the spouting-club."

"If I were in your situation, Mr. Darvil, I tell you what I would do. I would leave my daughter and this town to-morrow morning, and I would promise never to return, and never to molest her, on condition she allowed me a certain sum from her earnings, paid quarterly."

"And if I preferred living with her?"

"In that case, I, as a magistrate of this town, would have you sent away as a vagrant, or apprehended —"

"Ha!"

"Apprehended on suspicion of stealing that gold chain and seals which you wear so ostentatiously."

"By goles, but you're a clever fellow," said Darvil, involuntarily; "you know human natur'."

The banker smiled; strange to say, he was pleased with the compliment.

"But," resumed Darvil, helping himself to another slice of beef, "you are in the wrong box, — planted in Queer Street, as we say in London; for if you care a d—n about my daughter's respectability, you will never muzzle her father on suspicion of theft, — and so there's tit for tat, my old gentleman!"

"I shall deny that you are her father, Mr. Darvil; and I think you will find it hard to prove the fact in any town where I am a magistrate."

"By goles, what a good prig you would have made! You are as sharp as a gimlet. Surely you were brought up at the Old Bailey!"

"Mr. Darvil, be ruled. You seem a man not deaf to reason, and I ask you whether, in any town in this country, a poor man in suspicious circumstances can do anything against a rich man whose character is established? Perhaps you are right in the main; I have nothing to do with that. But I tell you that you shall quit this house in half an hour; that you shall never enter it again but at your peril; and if you do, within ten minutes from that time you shall be in the town jail. It is no longer a contest between you and your defenceless daughter, it is a contest between—"

"A tramper in fustian and a gemman as drives a coach," interrupted Darvil, laughing bitterly, yet heartily. "Good, good!"

The banker rose. "I think you have made a very clever definition," said he. "Half an hour, you recollect! Good evening."

"Stay," said Darvil; "you are the first man I have seen for many a year that I can take a fancy to. Sit down, sit down, I say, and talk a bit, and we shall come to terms soon, I dare say. That's right. Lord, how I should like to have you on the roadside, instead of within these four gimerack walls! Ha! ha! the argufying would be all in *my* favour then."

The banker was not a brave man, and his colour changed slightly at the intimation of this obliging wish. Darvil eyed him grimly and chucklingly.

The rich man resumed: "That may or may not be, Mr. Darvil, according as I might happen or not to have pistols about me. But to the point. Quit this house without further debate, without noise, without mentioning to any one else your claim upon its owner —"

"Well, and the return?"

"Ten guineas now, and the same sum quarterly as long as the young lady lives in this town and you never persecute her by word or letter."

"That is forty guineas a year; I can't live upon it."

"You will cost less in the House of Correction, Mr. Darvil."

"Come, make it a hundred; Alley is cheap at that."

"Not a farthing more," said the banker, buttoning up his breeches pockets with a determined air.

"Well, out with the shiners."

"Do you promise or not?"

"I promise."

"There are your ten guineas. If in half an hour you are not gone, why, then —"

"Then?"

"Why, then you have robbed me of ten guineas, and must take the usual consequences of robbery."

Darvil started to his feet, his eyes glared; he grasped the carving-knife before him.

"You are a bold fellow," said the banker, quietly, "but it won't do. It is not worth your while to murder me, and I am a man sure to be missed."

Darvil sank down, sullen and foiled. The respectable man was more than a match for the villain.

"Had you been as poor as I, Gad, what a rogue you would have been!"

"I think not," said the banker; "I believe roguery to be a very bad policy. Perhaps once I *was* almost as poor as you are, but I never turned rogue."

"You never were in my circumstances," returned Darvil, gloomily. "I was a gentleman's son. Come, you shall hear my story. My father was well-born, but married a maid-servant when he was at college; his family disowned him, and left him to starve. He died in the struggle against a poverty he was not brought up to, and my dam went into service again, became housekeeper to an old bachelor, sent me to school; but Mother had a family by the old bachelor, and I was taken from school and put to trade. All hated me, for I was ugly, damn them! Mother cut me. I wanted money, robbed the old bachelor, was sent to jail, and learned there a lesson or two how to rob better in future. Mother died; I was adrift on the world. The world was my foe; could

not make it up with the world, so we went to war, — you understand, old boy? Married a poor woman and pretty, — wife made me jealous; had learned to suspect every one. Alice born; did not believe her mine, — not like me; perhaps a gentleman's child. I hate, I loathe gentlemen. Got drunk one night; kicked my wife in the stomach three weeks after her confinement. Wife died; tried for my life, — got off. Went to another county; having had a sort of education, and being sharp eno', got work as a mechanic. Hated work just as I hated gentlemen, — for was I not by blood a gentleman? There was the curse. Alice grew up; never looked on her as my flesh and blood. Her mother was a w——, why should not *she* be one? There, — that's enough; plenty of excuse, I think, for all I have ever done. Curse the world; curse the rich; curse the handsome; curse, curse all!"

"You have been a very foolish man," said the banker, "and seem to me to have had very good cards, if you had known how to play them. However, that is your lookout. It is not yet too late to repent; age is creeping on you. Man, there is another world."

The banker said the last words with a tone of solemn and even dignified adjuration.

"You think so, do you?" said Darvil, staring at him.

"From my soul I do."

"Then you are not the sensible man I took you for," replied Darvil, dryly; "and I should like to talk to you on that subject."

But our Dives, however sincere a believer, was by no means one —

"At whose control

Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul."

He had words of comfort for the pious, but he had none for the sceptic; he could soothe, but he could not convert, — it was not in his way; besides, he saw no credit in making a convert of Luke Darvil. Accordingly, he again rose, with some quickness, and said, —

"No, sir, that is useless, I fear, and I have no time to spare; and so once more good-night to you."

"But you have not arranged where my allowance is to be sent."

"Ah! true; I will guarantee it. You will find my name sufficient security."

"At least, it is the best I can get," returned Darvil, carelessly; "and, after all, it is not a bad chance day's work. But I'm sure I can't say where the money shall be sent. I don't know a man who would not grab it."

"Very well, then; the best thing (I speak as a man of business) will be to draw on me for ten guineas quarterly. Wherever you are staying, any banker can effect this for you. But mind, if ever you overdraw, the account stops."

"I understand," said Darvil; "and when I have finished the bottle I shall be off."

"You had better," replied the banker, as he opened the door.

The rich man returned home hurriedly. "So Alice, after all, has some gentle blood in her veins," thought he. "But that father,—no, it will never do. I wish he were hanged, and nobody the wiser. I should very much like to arrange the matter without marrying; but then—scandal, scandal, scandal. After all, I had better give up all thoughts of her. She is monstrous handsome, and so—Humph! I shall never grow an old man."

CHAPTER VIII.

BEGAN to bend down his admiring eyes
On all her touching looks and qualities,
Turning their shapely sweetness every way
Till 't was his food and habit day by day. — LEIGH HUNT.

THERE must have been a secret something about Alice Darvil singularly captivating that (associated as she was with images of the most sordid and the vilest crimes) left her still pure and

lovely alike in the eyes of a man as fastidious as Ernest Maltravers and of a man as influenced by all the thoughts and theories of the world as the shrewd banker of C——. Amidst things foul and hateful had sprung up this beautiful flower, as if to preserve the inherent heavenliness and grace of human nature, and proclaim the handiwork of God in scenes where human nature had been most debased by the abuses of social art, and where the light of God himself was most darkened and obscured. That such contrasts, though rarely and as by chance, are found, every one who has carefully examined the wastes and deserts of life must own. I have drawn Alice Darvil scrupulously from life, and I can declare that I have not exaggerated hue or lineament in the portrait. I do not suppose, with our good banker, that she owed anything, unless it might be a greater delicacy of form and feature, to whatever mixture of gentle blood was in her veins. But somehow or other, in her original conformation there was the happy bias of the plants, towards the Pure and the Bright. For, despite Helvetius, a common experience teaches us that though education and circumstances may mould the mass, Nature herself sometimes forms the individual, and throws into the clay, or its spirit, so much of beauty or deformity that nothing can utterly subdue the original elements of character. From sweets one draws poison; from poisons another extracts but sweets. But I, often deeply pondering over the psychological history of Alice Darvil, think that one principal cause why she escaped the early contaminations around her was in the slow and protracted development of her intellectual faculties. Whether or not the brutal violence of her father had in childhood acted through the nerves upon the brain, certain it is that until she knew Maltravers,—until she loved, till she was cherished,—her mind had seemed torpid and locked up. True, Darvil had taught her nothing, nor permitted her to be taught anything; but that mere ignorance would have been no preservation to a quick, observant mind. It was the bluntness of the senses themselves that operated like an armour between her mind and the vile things around her. It was the rough, dull covering of the chrysalis,

framed to bear rude contact and biting weather, that the butterfly might break forth, winged and glorious, in due season. Had Alice been a quick child, Alice would have probably grown up a depraved and dissolute woman; but she comprehended, she understood, little or nothing till she found an inspirer in that affection which inspires both beast and man, which makes the dog (in his natural state one of the meanest of the savage race) a companion, a guardian, a protector, and raises Instinct half-way to the height of Reason.

The banker had a strong regard for Alice, and when he reached home he heard with great pain that she was in a high state of fever. She remained beneath his roof that night, and the elderly gentlewoman, his relation and *gouvernante*, attended her. The banker slept but little, and the next morning his countenance was unusually pale.

Towards daybreak Alice had fallen into a sound and refreshing sleep; and when, on waking, she found, by a note from her host, that her father had left her house and she might return in safety and without fear, a violent flood of tears, followed by long and grateful prayer, contributed to the restoration of her mind and nerves. Imperfect as this young woman's notions of abstract right and wrong still were, she was yet sensible to the claims of a father—no matter how criminal—upon his child; for feelings with her were so good and true that they supplied in a great measure the place of principles. She knew that she could not have lived under the same roof with her dreadful parent; but she still felt an uneasy remorse at thinking he had been driven from that roof in destitution and want. She hastened to dress herself and seek an audience with her protector; and the latter found with admiration and pleasure that he had anticipated her own instantaneous and involuntary design in the settlement made upon Darvil. He then communicated to Alice the compact he had already formed with her father, and she wept and kissed his hand when she heard, and secretly resolved that she would work hard to be enabled to increase the sum allowed. Oh, if her labours could serve to retrieve a parent from the necessity of darker resources for

support! Alas! when crime has become a custom, it is like gaming or drinking,—the excitement is wanting; and had Luke Darvil been suddenly made inheritor of the wealth of a Rothschild, he would either still have been a villain in one way or the other, or *ennui* would have awakened conscience, and he would have died of the change of habit.

Our banker always seemed more struck by Alice's moral feelings than even by her physical beauty. Her love for her child, for instance, impressed him powerfully, and he always gazed upon her with softer eyes when he saw her caressing or nursing the little fatherless creature, whose health was now delicate and precarious. It is difficult to say whether he was absolutely in love with Alice,—the phrase is too strong, perhaps, to be applied to a man past fifty, who had gone through emotions and trials enough to wear away freshness from his heart. His feelings altogether for Alice, the designs he entertained towards her, were of a very complicated nature; and it will be long, perhaps, before the reader can thoroughly comprehend them. He conducted Alice home that day; but he said little by the way,—perhaps because his female relation, for appearance's sake, accompanied them also. He, however, briefly cautioned Alice on no account to communicate to any one that it was her father who had been her visitor; and she still shuddered too much at the reminiscence to appear likely to converse on it. The banker also judged it advisable to be so far confidential with Alice's servant as to take her aside and tell her that the inauspicious stranger of the previous evening had been a very distant relation of Mrs. Butler, who, from a habit of drunkenness, had fallen into evil and disorderly courses. The banker added, with a sanctified air, that he trusted, by a little serious conversation, he had led the poor man to better notions, and that he had gone home with an altered mind to his family. "But, my good Hannah," he concluded, "you know you are a superior person, and above the vulgar sin of indiscriminate gossip; therefore, mention what has occurred to no one,—it can do no good to Mrs. Butler; it may hurt the man himself, who is well-to-do,—better off than he seems, and who, I hope, with

grace, may be a sincere penitent; and it will also—but that is nothing—very seriously displease me. By the by, Hannah, I shall be able to get your grandson into the Free School."

The banker was shrewd enough to perceive that he had carried his point; and he was walking home, satisfied, on the whole, with the way matters had been arranged, when he was met by a brother magistrate.

"Ha!" said the latter, "and how are you, my good sir? Do you know that we have had the Bow Street officers here, in search of a notorious villain who has broken from prison? He is one of the most determined and dexterous burglars in all England, and the runners have hunted him into our town. His very robberies have tracked him by the way. He robbed a gentleman the day before yesterday of his watch, and left him for dead on the road,—this was not thirty miles hence."

"Bless me!" said the banker, with emotion; "and what is the wretch's name?"

"Why, he has as many aliases as a Spanish grandee; but I believe the last name he has assumed is Peter Watts."

"Oh!" said our friend, relieved,— "well, have the runners found him?"

"No, but they are on his scent. A fellow answering to his description was seen by the man at the toll-bar, at daybreak this morning, on the way to F——; the officers are after him."

"I hope he may meet with his deserts,—and crime is never unpunished, even in this world. My best compliments to your lady. And how is little Jack? Well! glad to hear it, —fine boy, little Jack! Good-day."

"Good-day, my dear sir. Worthy man, that!"

CHAPTER IX.

"BUT who is this?" thought he. "A demon vile,
With wicked meaning and a vulgar style,—
Hammond they call him; they can give the name
Of man to devils. Why am I so tame?
Why crush I not the viper?" Fear replied,
"Watch him a while, and let his strength be tried." — CRABBE.

THE next morning, after breakfast, the banker took his horse, — a crop-eared, fast-trotting hackney, — and merely leaving word that he was going upon business into the country and should not return to dinner, turned his back on the spires of C——.

He rode slowly, for the day was hot. The face of the country, which was fair and smiling, might have tempted others to linger by the way; but our hard and practical man of the world was more influenced by the weather than the loveliness of the scenery. He did not look upon Nature with the eye of imagination; perhaps a railroad, had it then and there existed, would have pleased him better than the hanging woods, the shadowy valleys, and the changeful river that from time to time beautified the landscape on either side the road. But, after all, there is a vast deal of hypocrisy in the affected admiration for Nature; and I don't think one person in a hundred cares for what lies by the side of a road, so long as the road itself is good, hills levelled, and turnpikes cheap.

It was mid-noon, and many miles had been passed, when the banker turned down a green lane and quickened his pace. At the end of about three quarters of an hour he arrived at a little solitary inn called "The Angler," put up his horse, ordered his dinner at six o'clock, begged to borrow a basket to hold his fish; and it was then apparent that a longish cane he had carried with him was capable of being extended into a fishing-rod. He fitted in the various joints with care, as if

to be sure no accident had happened to the implement by the journey; pried anxiously into the contents of a black case of lines and flies, slung the basket behind his back, and while his horse was putting down his nose and whisking about his tail, in the course of those nameless coquetries that horses carry on with hostlers, our worthy brother of the rod strode rapidly through some green fields, gained the river side, and began fishing with much semblance of earnest interest in the sport. He had caught one trout,—seemingly by accident; for the astonished fish was hooked up on the outside of its jaw, probably while in the act, not of biting, but of gazing at, the bait,—when he grew discontented with the spot he had selected; and after looking round as if to convince himself that he was not liable to be disturbed or observed (a thought hateful to the fishing fraternity), he stole quickly along the margin, and finally quitting the river side altogether, struck into a path that, after a sharp walk of nearly an hour, brought him to the door of a cottage. He knocked twice, and then entered of his own accord; nor was it till the summer sun was near its decline that the banker regained his inn. His simple dinner, which they had delayed in wonder at the protracted absence of the angler and in expectation of the fishes he was to bring back to be fried, was soon despatched; his horse was ordered to the door, and the red clouds in the west already betokened the lapse of another day as he spurred from the spot on the fast-trotting hackney, fourteen miles an hour.

“That ’ere gemman has a nice bit of blood,” said the hostler, scratching his ear.

“Oiy; who be he?” said a hanger-on of the stables.

“I dooan’t know. He has been here twice afoar, and he never cauteshes anything to sinnify,—he be mighty fond of fishing, surely.”

Meanwhile, away sped the banker; milestone on milestone glided by, and still, scarce turning a hair, trotted gallantly out the good hackney. But the evening grew darker, and it began to rain,—a drizzling, persevering rain, that wets a man through ere he is aware of it. After his fiftieth year, a gentleman who has a tender regard for himself does not like to

get wet; and the rain inspired the banker, who was subject to rheumatism, with the resolution to take a short cut along the fields. There were one or two low hedges by this short way; but the banker had been there in the spring, and knew every inch of the ground. The hackney leaped easily, and the rider had a tolerably practised seat, and two miles saved might just prevent the menaced rheumatism; accordingly, our friend opened a white gate and scoured along the fields without any misgivings as to the prudence of his choice. He arrived at his first leap: there was the hedge, its summit just discernible in the dim light. On the other side, to the right, was a haystack, and close by this haystack seemed the most eligible place for clearing the obstacle. Now, since the banker had visited this place a deep ditch, that served as a drain, had been dug at the opposite base of the hedge, of which neither horse nor man was aware, so that the leap was far more perilous than was anticipated. Unconscious of this additional obstacle, the rider set off in a canter. The banker was high in air, his loins bent back, his rein slackened, his right hand raised knowingly, when the horse took fright at an object crouched by the haystack, swerved, plunged midway into the ditch, and pitched its rider two or three yards over its head. The banker recovered himself sooner than might have been expected; and finding himself, though bruised and shaken, still whole and sound, hastened to his horse. But the poor animal had not fared so well as its master, and its off-shoulder was either put out or dreadfully sprained. It had scrambled its way out of the ditch, and there it stood, disconsolate, by the hedge, as lame as one of the trees that, at irregular intervals, broke the symmetry of the barrier. On ascertaining the extent of his misfortune the banker became seriously uneasy; the rain increased, he was several miles yet from home, he was in the midst of houseless fields, with another leap before him,—the leap he had just passed behind,—and no other egress that he knew of into the main road. While these thoughts passed through his brain, he became suddenly aware that he was not alone. The dark object that had frightened his horse rose slowly from the snug

corner it had occupied by the haystack, and a gruff voice, that made the banker thrill to the marrow of his bones, cried: "Holla, who the devil are you?"

Lame as his horse was, the banker instantly put his foot into the stirrup; but before he could mount, a heavy gripe was laid on his shoulder, and turning round with as much fierceness as he could assume, he saw — what the tone of the voice had already led him to forebode — the ill-omened and cut-throat features of Luke Darvil.

"Ha! ha! my old annuitant, my clever feelosofer, jolly old boy, how are you? Give us a fist. Who would have thought to meet you on a rainy night, by a lone haystack, with a deep ditch on one side, and no chimney-pot within sight? Why, old fellow, I, Luke Darvil,—I, the vagabond, I, whom you would have sent to the treadmill for being poor and calling on my own daughter,—I am as rich as you are here, and as great, and as strong, and as powerful!"

And while he spoke, Darvil, who was really an under-sized man, seemed to swell and dilate till he appeared half a head taller than the shrinking banker, who was five feet eleven inches without his shoes.

"E—hem!" said the rich man, clearing his throat, which seemed to him uncommonly husky, "I do not know whether I insulted your poverty, my dear Mr. Darvil,—I hope not. But this is hardly a time for talking; pray let me mount, and —"

"Not a time for talking!" interrupted Darvil, angrily; "it's just the time, to my mind. Let me consider,—ay, I told you that whenever we met by the roadside, it would be my turn to have the best of the argufying."

"I dare say, I dare say, my good fellow."

"'Fellow' not me! I won't be fellowed now. I say I have the best of it here; man to man, I am your match."

"But why quarrel with me?" said the banker, coaxingly; "I never meant you harm, and I am sure you cannot mean me harm."

"No! And why," asked Darvil, coolly, "why do you think I can mean you no harm?"

"Because your annuity depends on me."

"Shrewdly put! We'll argufy that point. My life is a bad one, — not worth more than a year's purchase; now, suppose you have more than forty pounds about you, it may be better worth my while to draw my knife across your gullet than to wait for the quarter-day's ten pounds a time. You see, it's all a matter of calculation, my *dear* Mr. What's-your-name!"

"But," replied the banker, and his teeth began to chatter, "I have not forty pounds about me."

"How do I know that? You say so. Well, in the town yonder your word goes for more than mine; I never gainsaid you when you put that to me, did I? But here, by the haystack, my word is better than yours; and if I say you must and shall have forty pounds about you, let's see whether you dare contradict me."

"Look you, Darvil," said the banker, summoning up all his energy and intellect, for his moral power began now to back his physical cowardice, and he spoke calmly, and even bravely, though his heart throbbed aloud against his breast, and you might have knocked him down with a feather, "the London runners are even now hot after you."

"Ha! you lie!"

"Upon my honour I speak the truth; I heard the news last evening. They tracked you to C——; they tracked you out of the town; a word from me would have given you into their hands. I said nothing,—you are safe; you may yet escape. I will even help you to fly the country, and live out your natural date of years secure and in peace."

"You did not say that the other day in the snug drawing-room; you see I have the best of it now,—own that."

"I do," said the banker.

Darvil chuckled, and rubbed his hands.

The man of wealth once more felt his importance, and went on. "This is one side of the question. On the other, suppose you rob and murder me, do you think my death will lessen the heat of the pursuit against you? The whole country will be in arms, and before forty-eight hours are over you will be hunted down like a mad dog."

Darvil was silent, as if in thought; and after a pause replied: "Well, you are a 'cute one after all. What have you got about you? You know you drove a hard bargain the other day,—now it's my market: fustian has riz,—kersey has fell."

"All I have about me shall be yours," said the banker, eagerly.

"Give it me, then."

"There!" said the banker, placing his purse and pocket-book into Darvil's hands.

"And the watch?"

"The watch? Well, there!"

"What's that?"

The banker's senses were sharpened by fear, but they were not so sharp as those of Darvil; he heard nothing but the rain pattering on the leaves, and the rush of water in the ditch at hand. Darvil stooped and listened till, raising himself again, with a deep-drawn breath he said: "I think there are rats in the haystack; they will be running over me in my sleep: but they are playful creturs, and I like 'em. And now, my *dear* sir, I am afraid I must put an end to you!"

"Good heavens, what do you mean? How?"

"Man, there is another world!" quoth the ruffian, mimicking the banker's solemn tone in their former interview. "So much the better for you! In that world they don't tell tales."

"I swear I will never betray you."

"You do? Swear it, then."

"By all my hopes of earth and heaven!"

"What a d—d coward you be!" said Darvil, laughing scornfully. "Go,—you are safe. I am in good humour with myself again. I crow over you, for no man can make *me* tremble; and villain as you think me, while you fear me you cannot despise,—you respect me. Go, I say, go."

The banker was about to obey when suddenly from the haystack a broad red light streamed upon the pair, and the next moment Darvil was seized from behind and struggling in the gripe of a man nearly as powerful as himself. The light,

which came from a dark-lantern placed on the ground, revealed the forms of a peasant in a smock-fræck and two stout-built stalwart men armed with pistols, besides the one engaged with Darvil.

The whole of this scene was brought as by the trick of the stage, as by a flash of lightning, as by the change of a showman's phantasmagoria, before the astonished eyes of the banker. He stood arrested and spell-bound, his hand on his bridle, his foot on his stirrup. A moment more, and Darvil had dashed his antagonist on the ground; he stood at a little distance, his face reddened by the glare of the lantern, and fronting his assailants, that fiercest of all beasts,—a desperate man at bay! He had already succeeded in drawing forth his pistols, and he held one in each hand, his eyes flashing from beneath his bent brows, and turning quickly from foe to foe! At last those terrible eyes rested on the late reluctant companion of his solitude.

"So *you* then betrayed me," he said, very slowly, and directed his pistol to the head of the dismounted horseman.

"No, no!" cried one of the officers, for such were Darvil's assailants; "fire away in this direction, my hearty,—we're paid for it." The gentleman knew nothing at all about it."

"Nothing, by G—!" cried the banker, startled out of his sanctity.

"Then I shall keep my shot," said Darvil; "and mind, the first who approaches me is a dead man."

It so happened that the robber and the officers were beyond the distance which allows sure mark for a pistol-shot, and each party felt the necessity of caution.

"Your time is up, my swell cove!" cried the head of the detachment; "you have had your swing, and a long one it seems to have been,—you must now give in. Throw down your barkers, or we must make mutton of you, and rob the gallows."

Darvil did not reply, and the officers, accustomed to hold life cheap, moved on towards him, their pistols cocked and levelled.

Darvil fired,—one of the men staggered and fell. With a

kind of instinct, Darvil had singled out the one with whom he had before wrestled for life. The ruffian waited not for the others,—he turned and fled along the fields.

"Zounds, he is off!" cried the other two, and they rushed after him in pursuit. A pause, a shot, another, an oath, a groan, and all was still.

"It's all up with him now!" said one of the runners, in the distance; "he dies game."

At these words, the peasant, who had before skulked behind the haystack, seized the lantern from the ground and ran to the spot. The banker involuntarily followed.

There lay Luke Darvil on the grass,—still living, but a horrible and ghastly spectacle. One ball had pierced his breast, another had shot away his jaw. His eyes rolled fearfully, and he tore up the grass with his hands.

The officers looked coldly on. "He was a clever fellow!" said one.

"And has given us much trouble," said the other; "let us see to Will."

"But he's not dead yet," said the banker, shuddering.

"Sir, he cannot live a minute."

Darvil raised himself bolt upright, shook his clenched fist at his conquerors, and a fearful gurgling howl, which the nature of his wounds did not allow him to syllable into a curse, came from his breast; with that he fell flat on his back—a corpse.

"I am afraid, sir," said the elder officer, turning away, "you had a narrow escape; but how came you here?"

"Rather, how came *you* here?"

"Honest Hodge there, with the lantern, had marked the fellow skulk behind the haystack when he himself was going out to snare rabbits. He had seen our advertisement of Watts's person, and knew that we were then at a public-house some miles off. He came to us, conducted us to the spot; we heard voices, showed up the glim, and saw our man. Hodge, you are a good subject, and love justice."

"Yees, but I shall have the rewourd," said Hodge, showing his teeth.

"Talk o' that by and by," said the officer. "Will, how are you, man?"

"Bad," groaned the poor runner; and a rush of blood from the lips followed the groan.

It was many days before the ex-member for C—— sufficiently recovered the tone of his mind to think further of Alice; when he did, it was with great satisfaction that he reflected that Darvil was no more, and that the deceased ruffian was only known to the neighbourhood by the name of Peter Watts.

BOOK V.

Ὁ μουσοποιὸς, ἐνθαδ' Ἰππώναξ κεῖται,
Εἰ μὲν πονηρὸς, μὴ ποτέρχεν τῷ τύμβῳ
Εἰ δ' ἐσσι κρήγυός τε καὶ παρὰ χρηστῶν
Θαρσέων καθίξεν· κἄν θέλῃς ἀπόβριξον.

THEOCRITUS: *Epig. in Hippon.*

PARODY.

“My hero, turned author, lies mute in this section.
You may pass by the place if you're bored by reflection;
But if honest enough to be fond of the Muse,
Stay, and read where you're able, and sleep where you choose.”

CHAPTER I.

My genius spreads her wing,
And flies where Britain courts the western spring.

Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by,
Intent on high designs. — GOLDSMITH.

I HAVE no respect for the Englishman who re-enters London after long residence abroad without a pulse that beats quick and a heart that heaves high. The public buildings are few, and for the most part mean; the monuments of antiquity not comparable to those which the pettiest town in Italy can boast of; the palaces are sad rubbish; the houses of our peers and princes are shabby and shapeless heaps of brick. But what of all this? The spirit of London is in her thoroughfares,—her population! What wealth, what cleanliness, what order: what animation! How majestic, and yet how vivid is the life that runs through her myriad veins! How, as the lamps

blaze upon you at night, and street after street glides by your wheels, each so regular in its symmetry, so equal in its civilization,—how all speak of the CITY OF FREEMEN!

Yes, Maltravers felt his heart swell within him as the post-horses whirled on his dingy carriage over Westminster Bridge, along Whitehall, through Regent Street, towards one of the quiet and private-house-like hotels that are scattered round the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square.

Ernest's arrival had been expected. He had written from Paris to Cleveland to announce it, and Cleveland had in reply informed him that he had engaged apartments for him at Mivart's. The smiling waiters ushered him into a spacious and well-aired room, the armchair was already wheeled by the fire, a score or so of letters strewed the table, together with two of the evening papers. And how eloquently of busy England do those evening papers speak! A stranger might have felt that he wanted no friend to welcome him,—the whole room smiled on him a welcome.

Maltravers ordered his dinner and opened his letters. They were of no importance: one from his steward, one from his banker, another about the county races, a fourth from a man he had never heard of, requesting the vote and powerful interest of Mr. Maltravers for the county of B——, should the rumour of a dissolution be verified; the unknown candidate referred Mr. Maltravers to his "well-known public character." From these epistles Ernest turned impatiently, and perceived a little three-cornered note which had hitherto escaped his attention. It was from Cleveland, intimating that he was in town, that his health still precluded his going out, but that he trusted to see his dear Ernest as soon as he arrived.

Maltravers was delighted at the prospect of passing his evening so agreeably; he soon despatched his dinner and his newspapers, and walked in the brilliant lamplight of a clear, frosty evening of early December in London to his friend's house in Curzon Street,—a small house, bachelor-like and unpretending; for Cleveland spent his moderate though easy fortune almost entirely at his country villa. The familiar face of the old valet greeted Ernest at the door, and he only

paused to hear that his guardian was nearly recovered to his usual health, ere he was in the cheerful drawing-room, and — since Englishmen do not embrace — returning the cordial gripe of the kindly Cleveland.

“Well, my dear Ernest,” said Cleveland, after they had gone through the preliminary round of questions and answers, “here you are at last, Heaven be praised! And how well you are looking; how much you are improved! It is an excellent period of the year for your *début* in London. I shall have time to make you intimate with people before the whirl of ‘the season’ commences.”

“Why, I thought of going to Burleigh, my country place. I have not seen it since I was a child.”

“No, no; you have had solitude enough at Como, if I may trust to your letter. You must now mix with the great London world; and you will enjoy Burleigh the more in the summer.”

“I fancy this great London world will give me very little pleasure; it may be pleasant enough to young men just let loose from college, but your crowded ballrooms and monotonous clubs will be wearisome to one who has grown fastidious before his time. *J’ai vécu beaucoup dans peu d’années*. I have drawn in youth too much upon the capital of existence to be highly delighted with the ostentatious parsimony with which our great men economize pleasure.”

“Don’t judge before you have gone through the trial,” said Cleveland; “there is something in the opulent splendour, the thoroughly sustained magnificence, with which the leaders of English fashion conduct even the most insipid amusements, that is above contempt. Besides, you need not necessarily live with the butterflies. There are plenty of bees that will be very happy to make your acquaintance. Add to this, my dear Ernest, the pleasure of being made of — of being of importance in your own country; for you are young, well-born, and sufficiently handsome to be an object of interest to mothers and to daughters; while your name and property and interest will make you courted by men who want to borrow your money and obtain your influence in your county. No, Mar-

travers, stay in London,—amuse yourself your first year, and decide on your occupation and career the next; but reconnoitre before you give battle.”

Maltravers was not ill-pleased to follow his friend’s advice, since by so doing he obtained his friend’s guidance and society. Moreover, he deemed it wise and rational to see, face to face, the eminent men in England with whom, if he fulfilled his promise to De Montaigne, he was to run the race of honourable rivalry. Accordingly, he consented to Cleveland’s propositions.

“And have you,” said he, hesitating, as he loitered by the door after the stroke of twelve had warned him to take his leave,—“have you never heard anything of my—my—the unfortunate Alice Darvil?”

“Who? Oh! that poor young woman,—I remember. Not a syllable.”

Maltravers sighed deeply and departed.

CHAPTER II.

*Je trouve que c’est une folie de vouloir étudier le monde en simple spectateur. . . . Dans l’école du monde, comme dans celle de l’amour, il faut commencer par pratiquer ce qu’on veut apprendre.*¹—ROUSSEAU.

ERNEST MALTRAVERS was now fairly launched upon the wide ocean of London. Amongst his other property was a house in Seamore Place,—that quiet, yet central street, which enjoys the air without the dust of the Park. It had been hitherto let, and the tenant now quitting very opportunely, Maltravers was delighted to secure so pleasant a residence; for he was still romantic enough to desire to look out upon trees and verdure rather than brick houses. He indulged only in two other luxuries: his love of music tempted him to

¹ “I find that it is a folly to wish to study the world like a simple spectator. . . . In the school of the world, as in that of love, it is necessary to begin by practising what we wish to learn.”

an opera-box, and he had that English feeling which prides itself in the possession of beautiful horses,—a feeling that enticed him into an extravagance on this head that baffled the competition and excited the envy of much richer men. But four thousand a year goes a great way with a single man who does not gamble, and is too philosophical to make superfluities wants.

The world doubled his income, magnified his old country-seat into a superb château, and discovered that his elder brother, who was only three or four years older than himself, had no children. The world was very courteous to Ernest Maltravers.

It was, as Cleveland said, just at that time of year when people are at leisure to make new acquaintances. A few only of the most difficult houses in town were open, and their doors were cheerfully expanded to the accomplished ward of the popular Cleveland. Authors and statesmen and orators and philosophers,—to all he was presented, all seemed pleased with him, and Ernest became the fashion before he was conscious of the distinction. But he had rightly foreboded. He had commenced life too soon; he was disappointed; he found some persons he could admire, some whom he could like, but none with whom he could grow intimate, or for whom he could feel an interest. Neither his heart nor his imagination was touched; all appeared to him like artificial machines; he was discontented with things like life, but in which something or other was wanting. He more than ever recalled the brilliant graces of Valerie de Ventadour, which had thrown a charm over the most frivolous circles; he even missed the perverse and fantastic vanity of Castruccio. The mediocre poet seemed to him at least less mediocre than the worldlings about him. Nay, even the selfish good spirits and dry shrewdness of Lumley Ferrers would have been an acceptable change to the dull polish and unrevealed egotism of jealous wits and party politicians. “If these are the flowers of the parterre, what must be the weeds?” said Maltravers to himself, returning from a party at which he had met half a score of the most orthodox lions.

He began to feel the aching pain of satiety.

But the winter glided away, the season commenced, and Maltravers was whirled on with the rest into the bubbling vortex.

CHAPTER III.

AND crowds commencing mere vexation,
Retirement sent its invitation. — SHENSTONE.

THE tench no doubt considers the pond in which he lives as the Great World. There is no place, however stagnant, which is not the Great World to the creatures that move about in it. People who have lived all their lives in a village still talk of the world as if they had ever seen it! An old woman in a hovel does not put her nose out of her door on a Sunday without thinking she is going amongst the pomps and vanities of the Great World. *Ergo*, the Great World is to all of us the little circle in which we live. But as fine people set the fashion, so the circle of fine people is called the Great World *par excellence*. Now this Great World is not a bad thing when we thoroughly understand it; and the London Great World is at least as good as any other. But then we scarcely *do* understand that or anything else in our *beaux jours*,—which, if they are sometimes the most exquisite, are also often the most melancholy and the most wasted portion of our life. Maltravers had not yet found out either *the set* that pleased him or the species of amusement that really amused. Therefore he drifted on and about the vast whirlpool, making plenty of friends, going to balls and dinners, and bored with both, as men are who have no object in society. Now, the way society is enjoyed is to have a pursuit, a *métier* of some kind, and then to go into the world, either to make the individual object a social pleasure, or to obtain a reprieve from some toilsome avocation. Thus, if you are a politician, poli-

tics at once make an object in your closet, and a social tie between others and yourself when you are in the world. The same may be said of literature, though in a less degree, and though, as fewer persons care about literature than politics, your companions must be more select. If you are very young, you are fond of dancing; if you are very profligate, perhaps you are fond of flirtations with your friend's wife. These last are objects in their way, but they don't last long, and, even with the most frivolous, are not occupations that satisfy the whole mind and heart, in which there is generally an aspiration after something useful. It is not vanity alone that makes a man of the *mode* invent a new bit, or give his name to a new kind of carriage, — it is the influence of that mystic yearning after utility which is one of the master-ties between the individual and the species.

Maltravers was not happy, — that is a lot common enough; but he was not amused, — and that is a sentence more insupportable. He lost a great part of his sympathy with Cleveland, for when a man is not amused, he feels an involuntary contempt for those who are. He fancies they are pleased with trifles which his superior wisdom is compelled to disdain. Cleveland was of that age when we generally grow social; for by being rubbed long and often against the great loadstone of society, we obtain, in a thousand little minute points, an attraction in common with our fellows. Their petty sorrows and small joys, their objects of interest or employment, at some time or other have been ours. We gather up a vast collection of moral and mental farthings of exchange, and we scarcely find any intellect too poor but what we can deal with it in some way. But in youth we are egoists and sentimentalists, and Maltravers belonged to the fraternity who employ —

“The heart in passion and the head in rhymes.”

At length, just when London begins to grow most pleasant, when flirtations become tender, and water-parties numerous, when birds sing in the groves of Richmond, and whitebait refresh the statesman by the shores of Greenwich, — Maltrav

ers abruptly fled from the gay metropolis, and arrived, one lovely evening in July, at his own ivy-grown porch of Burleigh.

What a soft, fresh, delicious evening it was! He had quitted his carriage at the lodge, and followed it across the small but picturesque park alone and on foot. He had not seen the place since childhood; he had quite forgotten its aspect. He now wondered how he could have lived anywhere else. The trees did not stand in stately avenues, nor did the antlers of the deer wave above the sombre fern; it was not the domain of a grand seigneur, but of an old, long-descended English squire. Antiquity spoke in the moss-grown palings, in the shadowy groves, in the sharp gable-ends and heavy mullions of the house as it now came in view at the base of a hill covered with wood, and partially veiled by the shrubs of the neglected pleasure-ground, separated from the park by the invisible ha-ha. There, gleamed in the twilight the watery face of the oblong fish-pool, with its old-fashioned willows at each corner; there, gray and quaint, was the monastic dial; and there was the long terrace walk, with discoloured and broken vases, now filled with the orange or the aloe, which, in honour of his master's arrival, the gardener had extracted from the dilapidated greenhouse. The very evidence of neglect around, the very weeds and grass on the half-obliterated road, touched Maltravers with a sort of pitying and remorseful affection for his calm and sequestered residence. And it was not with his usual proud step and erect crest that he passed from the porch to the solitary library through a line of his servants; the two or three old retainers belonging to the place were utterly unfamiliar to him, and they had no smile for their stranger lord.

CHAPTER IV.

Lucian. He that is born to be a man, neither should nor can be anything nobler, greater, and better than a man.

Peregrine. But, good Lucian, for the very reason that he may not become less than a man, he should be always striving to be more. — WIELAND: *Peregrinus Proteus.*

It was two years from the date of the last chapter before Maltravers again appeared in general society. These two years had sufficed to produce a revolution in his fate. Ernest Maltravers had lost the happy rights of the private individual; he had given himself to the Public; he had surrendered his name to men's tongues, and was a thing that all had a right to praise, to blame, to scrutinize, to spy. Ernest Maltravers had become an author.

Let no man tempt Gods and Columns without weighing well the consequences of his experiment. He who publishes a book attended with a moderate success, passes a mighty barrier. He will often look back with a sigh of regret at the land he has left forever. The beautiful and decent obscurity of hearth and home is gone. He can no longer feel the just indignation of manly pride when he finds himself ridiculed or reviled. He has parted with the shadow of his life. His motives may be misrepresented, his character belied; his manners, his person, his dress, the "very trick of his walk" are all fair food for the cavil and the caricature. He can never go back, he cannot even pause; he has chosen his path, and all the natural feelings that make the nerve and muscle of the active being, urge him to proceed. To stop short is to fail. He has told the world that he will make a name; and he must be set down as a pretender, or toil on till the boast be fulfilled. Yet Maltravers thought nothing of all this when, intoxicated with his own dreams and aspirations, he desired to make a world his confidant,— when from the living

Nature, and the lore of books, and the mingled result of inward study and external observation, he sought to draw forth something that might interweave his name with the pleasurable associations of his kind. His easy fortune and lonely state gave him up to his own thoughts and contemplations; they suffused his mind till it ran over upon the page which makes the channel that connects the solitary Fountain with the vast Ocean of Human Knowledge. The temperament of Maltravers was, as we have seen, neither irritable nor fearful. He formed himself, as a sculptor forms, with a model before his eyes and an ideal in his heart. He endeavoured, with labour and patience, to approach nearer and nearer with every effort to the standard of such excellence as he thought might ultimately be attained by a reasonable ambition; and when, at last, his judgment was satisfied, he surrendered the product with a tranquil confidence to a more impartial tribunal.

His first work was successful; perhaps for this reason,—that it bore the stamp of the Honest and the Real. He did not sit down to report of what he had never seen, to dilate on what he had never felt. A quiet and thoughtful observer of life, his descriptions were the more vivid because his own first impressions were not yet worn away. His experience had sunk deep, not on the arid surface of matured age, but in the fresh soil of youthful emotions. Another reason, perhaps, that obtained success for his essay was that he had more varied and more elaborate knowledge than young authors think it necessary to possess. He did not, like Cesarini, attempt to make a show of words upon a slender capital of ideas. Whether his style was eloquent or homely, it was still in him a faithful transcript of considered and digested thought. A third reason—and I dwell on these points, not more to elucidate the career of Maltravers than as hints which may be useful to others—a third reason why Maltravers obtained a prompt and favourable reception from the public was that he had not hackneyed his peculiarities of diction and thought in that worst of all schools for the literary novice,—the columns of a magazine. Periodicals form an excellent mode of communication between the public and an author *al-*

ready established, who has lost the charm of novelty, but gained the weight of acknowledged reputation, and who, either upon politics or criticism, seeks for frequent and continuous occasions to enforce his peculiar theses and doctrines. But upon the young writer this mode of communication, if too long continued, operates most injuriously both as to his future prospects and his own present taste and style. With respect to the first, it familiarizes the public to his mannerism (and all writers worth reading have mannerism) in a form to which the said public are not inclined to attach much weight. He forestalls in a few months what ought to be the effect of years; namely, the wearying a world soon nauseated with the *toujours perdrix*. With respect to the last, it induces a man to write for momentary effects; to study a false smartness of style and reasoning; to bound his ambition of durability to the last day of the month; to expect immediate returns for labour; to recoil at the "hope deferred" of serious works on which judgment is slowly formed. The man of talent who begins young at periodicals, and goes on long, has generally something crude and stunted about both his compositions and his celebrity. He grows the oracle of small coteries, and we can rarely get out of the impression that he is cockneyfied and conventional. Periodicals sadly mortgaged the claims that Hazlitt and many others of his contemporaries had upon a vast reversionary estate of Fame. But I here speak too politically: to some, the *res augustæ domi* leave no option; and, as Aristotle and the Greek proverb have it, we cannot carve out all things with the knife of the Delphic cutler.

The second work that Maltravers put forth, at an interval of eighteen months from the first, was one of a graver and higher nature,—it served to confirm his reputation; and that is success enough for a second work, which is usually an author's *pons asinorum*. He who, after a triumphant first book, does not dissatisfy the public with a second, has a fair chance of gaining a fixed station in literature. But now commenced the pains and perils of the after-birth. By a maiden effort an author rarely makes enemies. His fellow-writers are not yet prepared to consider him as a rival; if he be tolerably

rich, they unconsciously trust that he will not become a regular, or, as they term it, "a professional" author: he did something just to be talked of; he may write no more, or his second book may fail. But when that second book comes out, and does not fail, they begin to look about them: envy wakens, malice begins, and all the old school — gentlemen who have retired on their pensions of renown — regard him as an intruder; then the sneer, then the frown, the caustic irony, the biting review, the depreciating praise. The novice begins to think that he is farther from the goal than before he set out upon the race.

Maltravers had upon the whole a tolerably happy temperament; but he was a very proud man, and he had the nice soul of a courageous, honourable, punctilious gentleman. He thought it singular that society should call upon him, as a gentleman, to shoot his best friend if that friend affronted him with a rude word, and yet that, as an author, every fool and liar might, with perfect impunity, cover reams of paper with the most virulent personal abuse of him.

It was one evening in the early summer that, revolving anxious and doubtful thoughts, Ernest sauntered gloomily along his terrace,—

"And watched with wistful eyes the setting sun," —

when he perceived a dusty travelling carriage whirled along the road by the ha-ha, and a hand waved in recognition from the open window. His guests had been so rare and his friends were so few that Maltravers could not conjecture who was his intended visitant. His brother, he knew, was in London. Cleveland, from whom he had that day heard, was at his villa. Ferrers was enjoying himself in Vienna. Who could it be? We may say of solitude what we please; but after two years of solitude, a visitor is a pleasurable excitement. Maltravers retraced his steps, entered his house, and was just in time to find himself almost in the arms of De Montaigne.

CHAPTER V.

QUID tam dextro pede concipis ut te,
Conatus non pœniteat, votique peracti ? ¹ — JUVENAL.

"YES," said De Montaigne, "in my way I also am fulfilling my destiny. I am a member of the Chambre de Députés, and on a visit to England upon some commercial affairs. I found myself in your neighbourhood, and of course could not resist the temptation; so you must receive me as your guest for some days."

"I congratulate you cordially on your senatorial honours. I have already heard of your rising name."

"I return the congratulations with equal warmth. You are bringing my prophecies to pass. I have read your works with increased pride at our friendship."

Maltravers sighed slightly, and half turned away.

"The desire of distinction," said he, after a pause, "grows upon us till excitement becomes disease. The child who is born with the mariner's instinct laughs with glee when his paper bark skims the wave of a pool; by and by nothing will content him but the ship and the ocean. Like the child is the author."

"I am pleased with your simile," said De Montaigne, smiling. "Do not spoil it, but go on with your argument."

Maltravers continued: "Scarcely do we win the applause of a moment ere we summon the past and conjecture the future. Our contemporaries no longer suffice for competitors, our age for the court to pronounce on our claims; we call up the Dead as our only true rivals, we appeal to Posterity as our sole just tribunal. Is this vain in us? Possibly. Yet such vanity humbles. 'T is then only we learn all the differ-

¹ "What! under such happy auspices do you conceive that you may not repent of your endeavour and accomplished wish?"

ence between Reputation and Fame,—between To-Day and Immortality!”

“Do you think,” replied De Montaigne, “that the dead did not feel the same when they first trod the path that leads to the life beyond life? Continue to cultivate the mind, to sharpen by exercise the genius, to attempt to delight or to instruct your race; and even supposing you fall short of every model you set before you,—supposing your name moulder with your dust,—still you will have passed life more nobly than the unlaborious herd. Grant that you win not that glorious accident, ‘a name below,’ how can you tell but what you may have fitted yourself for high destiny and employ in the world, not of men, but of spirits? The powers of the mind are things that cannot be less immortal than the mere sense of identity; their acquisitions accompany us through the Eternal Progress; and we may obtain a lower or a higher grade hereafter, in proportion as we are more or less fitted by the exercise of our intellect to comprehend and execute the solemn agencies of God. The wise man is nearer to the angels than the fool is. This may be an apocryphal dogma, but it is not an impossible theory.”

“But we may waste the sound enjoyments of actual life in chasing the hope you justly allow to be ‘apocryphal;’ and our knowledge may go for nothing in the eyes of the Omniscient.”

“Very well,” said De Montaigne, smiling; “but answer me honestly. By the pursuits of intellectual ambition *do* you waste the sound enjoyments of life? If so, you do not pursue the system rightly. Those pursuits ought only to quicken your sense for such pleasures as are the true relaxations of life. And this, with you peculiarly, since you are fortunate enough not to depend for subsistence upon literature. Did you do so, I might rather advise you to be a trunkmaker than an author. . A man ought not to attempt any of the highest walks of Mind and Art as the mere provision of daily bread; not literature alone, but everything else of the same degree. He ought not to be a statesman, or an orator, or a philosopher, as a thing of pence and shillings; and usually all men, save the poor poet, feel this truth insensibly.”

"This may be fine preaching," said Maltravers; "but you may be quite sure that the pursuit of literature is a pursuit apart from the ordinary objects of life, and you cannot command the enjoyments of both."

"I think otherwise," said De Montaigne; "but it is not in a country house eighty miles from the capital, without wife, guests, or friends, that the experiment can be fairly made. Come, Maltravers, I see before you a brave career, and I cannot permit you to halt at the onset."

"You do not see all the calumnies that are already put forth against me, to say nothing of all the assurances (and many by clever men) that there is nothing in me!"

"Dennis was a clever man, and said the same thing of your Pope. Madame de Sévigné was a clever woman, but she thought Racine would never be very famous. Milton saw nothing in the first efforts of Dryden that made him consider Dryden better than a rhymester. Aristophanes was a good judge of poetry, yet how ill he judged of Euripides! But all this is commonplace, and yet you bring arguments that a commonplace answers in evidence against yourself."

"But it is unpleasant not to answer attacks,—not to retaliate on enemies."

"Then answer attacks, and retaliate on enemies."

"But would that be wise?"

"If it give you pleasure,—it would not please *me*."

"Come, De Montaigne, you are reasoning Socratically. I will ask you plainly and bluntly, would you advise an author to wage war on his literary assailants, or to despise them?"

"Both; let him attack but few, and those rarely. But it is his policy to show that he is one whom it is better not to provoke too far. The author always has the world on his side against the critics, if he choose his opportunity. And he must always recollect that he is 'A STATE' in himself, which must sometimes go to war in order to procure peace. The time for war or for peace must be left to the State's own diplomacy and wisdom."

"You would make us political machines."

"I would make every man's conduct more or less mechan-

cal, for system is the triumph of mind over matter; the just equilibrium of all the powers and passions may seem like machinery. Be it so. Nature meant the world, the creation, man himself, for machines."

"And one must even be in a passion mechanically, according to your theories."

"A man is a poor creature who is not in a passion sometimes; but a very unjust, or a very foolish one, if he be in a passion with the wrong person and in the wrong place and time. But enough of this, it is growing late."

"And when will Madame visit England?"

"Oh! not yet, I fear. But you will meet Cesarini in London this year or the next. He is persuaded that you did not see justice done to his poems, and is coming here, as soon as his indolence will let him, to proclaim your treachery in a biting preface to some toothless satire."

"Satire!"

"Yes; more than one of your poets made their way by a satire, and Cesarini is persuaded he shall do the same. Castuccio is not as far-sighted as his namesake the Prince of Lucca. Good-night, my dear Ernest."

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN with much pains this boasted learning's got,
'T is an affront to those who have it not.

CHURCHILL: *The Author.*

THERE was something in De Montaigne's conversation which, without actual flattery, reconciled Maltravers to himself and his career. It served less, perhaps, to excite than to sober and brace his mind. De Montaigne could have made no man rash, but he could have made many men energetic and persevering. The two friends had some points in common; but Maltravers had far more prodigality of nature and passion about him,—had more of flesh and blood, with the faults and

excellences of flesh and blood. De Montaigne held so much to his favourite doctrine of moral equilibrium that he had really reduced himself in much to a species of clockwork. As impulses are formed from habits, so the regularity of De Montaigne's habits made his impulses virtuous and just, and he yielded to them as often as a hasty character might have done; but then those impulses never urged to anything speculative or daring. De Montaigne could not go beyond a certain defined circle of action. He had no sympathy for any reasonings based purely on the hypotheses of the imagination: he could not endure Plato, and he was dumb to the eloquent whispers of whatever was refining in poetry or mystical in wisdom.

Maltravers, on the contrary, not disdaining Reason, ever sought to assist her by the Imaginative Faculty, and held all philosophy incomplete and unsatisfactory that bounded its inquiries to the limits of the Known and Certain. He loved the inductive process; but he carried it out to Conjecture as well as Fact. He maintained that, by a similar hardihood, all the triumphs of science, as well as art, had been accomplished; that Newton, that Copernicus, would have done nothing if they had not imagined as well as reasoned, guessed as well as ascertained. Nay, it was an aphorism with him that the very soul of philosophy is conjecture. He had the most implicit confidence in the operations of the mind and the heart properly formed, and deemed that the very excesses of emotion and thought, in men well trained by experience and study, are conducive to useful and great ends. But the more advanced years, and the singularly practical character of De Montaigne's views, gave him a superiority in argument over Maltravers which the last submitted to unwillingly. While, on the other hand, De Montaigne secretly felt that his young friend reasoned from a broader base and took in a much wider circumference, and that he was at once more liable to failure and error, and more capable of new discovery and of intellectual achievement. But their ways in life being different, they did not clash; and De Montaigne, who was sincerely interested in Ernest's fate, was contented to harden his friend's mind

against the obstacles in his way, and leave the rest to experiment and to Providence. They went up to London together, and De Montaigne returned to Paris. Maltravers appeared once more in the haunts of the gay and great. He felt that his new character had greatly altered his position. He was no longer courted and caressed for the same vulgar and adventitious circumstances of fortune, birth, and connections as before, yet for circumstances that to him seemed equally unflattering. He was not sought for his merit, his intellect, his talents, but for his momentary celebrity. He was an author in fashion, and run after, as anything else in fashion might have been. He was invited, less to be talked to than to be stared at. He was far too proud in his temper, and too pure in his ambition, to feel his vanity elated by sharing the enthusiasm of the circles with a German prince or an industrious flea. Accordingly, he soon repelled the advances made to him, was reserved and supercilious to fine ladies, refused to be the fashion, and became very unpopular with the literary exclusives. They even began to run down the works because they were dissatisfied with the author. But Maltravers had based his experiments upon the vast masses of the general Public. He had called the PEOPLE of his own and other countries to be his audience and his judges, and all the coteries in the world could not have injured him. He was like the member for an immense constituency, who may offend individuals, so long as he keep his footing with the body at large. But while he withdrew himself from the insipid and the idle, he took care not to become separated from the world. He formed his own society according to his tastes; took pleasure in the manly and exciting topics of the day; and sharpened his observation and widened his sphere as an author by mixing freely and boldly with all classes as a citizen. But literature became to him as art to the artist, as his mistress to the lover, an engrossing and passionate delight. He made it his glorious and divine profession; he loved it *as* a profession; he devoted to its pursuits and honours his youth, cares, dreams,—his mind and his heart and his soul. He was a silent but intense enthusiast in the priesthood he had entered.

From LITERATURE he imagined had come all that makes nations enlightened and men humane. And he loved Literature the more because her distinctions were not those of the world, because she had neither ribbons, nor stars, nor high places at her command. A name in the deep gratitude and hereditary delight of men,—this was the title she bestowed. Hers was the Great Primitive Church of the world, without Popes or Muftis, sinecures, pluralities, and hierarchies. Her servants spoke to the earth as the prophets of old, anxious only to be heard and believed. Full of this fanaticism, Ernest Maltravers pursued his way in the great procession of the myrtle-bearers to the sacred shrine. He carried the thyrsus, and he believed in the god. By degrees his fanaticism worked in him the philosophy which De Montaigne would have derived from sober calculation,—it made him indifferent to the thorns in the path, to the storms in the sky. He learned to despise the enmity he provoked, the calumnies that assailed him. Sometimes he was silent, but sometimes he retorted. Like a soldier who serves a cause, he believed that when the cause was injured in his person, the weapons confided to his hands might be wielded without fear and without reproach. Gradually he became feared as well as known; and while many abused him, none could contemn.

It would not suit the design of this work to follow Maltravers step by step in his course. I am only describing the principal events, not the minute details, of his intellectual life. Of the character of his works it will be enough to say, that, whatever their faults, they were original, they were his own. He did not write according to copy, nor compile from commonplace books. He was an artist, it is true,—for what is genius itself but art?—but he took laws and harmony and order from the great code of Truth and Nature,—a code that demands intense and unrelaxing study, though its first principles are few and simple. That study Maltravers did not shrink from. It was a deep love of truth that made him a subtle and searching analyst even in what the dull world considers trifles; for he knew that nothing in literature is in itself trifling,—that it is often but a hairsbreadth that di-

vides a truism from a discovery. He was the more original, because he sought rather after the True than the New. No two minds are ever the same, and therefore any man who will give us fairly and frankly the results of his own impressions, uninfluenced by the servilities of imitation, will be original. But it was not from originality, which really made his predominant merit, that Maltravers derived his reputation, for his originality was not of that species which generally dazzles the vulgar,—it was not extravagant nor *bizarre*; he affected no system and no school. Many authors of his day seemed more novel and *unique* to the superficial. Profound and durable invention proceeds by subtle and fine gradations; it has nothing to do with those jerks and starts, those convulsions and distortions, which belong, not to the vigour and health, but to the epilepsy and disease, of Literature.

CHAPTER VII.

BEING got out of town, the first thing I did was to give my mule her head. — *Gil Blas*.

ALTHOUGH the character of Maltravers was gradually becoming more hard and severe; although, as his reason grew more muscular, his imagination lost something of its early bloom, and he was already very different from the wild boy who had set the German youths in a blaze, and had changed into a Castle of Indolence the little cottage tenanted with Poetry and Alice,—he still preserved many of his old habits; he loved, at frequent intervals, to disappear from the great world, to get rid of books and friends, and luxury and wealth, and make solitary excursions, sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, through this fair garden of England.

It was one soft May-day that he found himself on such an expedition, slowly riding through one of the green lanes of —shire. His cloak and his saddle-bags comprised all his

baggage, and the world was before him, "where to choose his place of rest." The lane wound at length into the main road, and just as he came upon it he fell in with a gay party of equestrians.

Foremost of the cavalcade rode a lady in a dark-green habit, mounted on a thoroughbred English horse, which she managed with so easy a grace that Maltravers halted in involuntary admiration. He himself was a consummate horseman, and he had the quick eye of sympathy for those who shared the accomplishment. He thought, as he gazed, that he had never seen but one woman whose air and mien on horseback were so full of that nameless elegance which skill and courage in any art naturally bestow: that woman was Valerie de Ventadour. Presently, to his great surprise, the lady advanced from her companions, neared Maltravers, and said, in a voice which he did not at first distinctly recognize: "Is it possible? Do I see Mr. Maltravers?"

She paused a moment, and then threw aside her veil, and Ernest beheld — Madame de Ventadour! By this time a tall, thin gentleman had joined the Frenchwoman.

"Has Madame met with an acquaintance?" said he; "and if so, will she permit me to partake her pleasure?"

The interruption seemed a relief to Valerie; she smiled and coloured.

"Let me introduce you to Mr. Maltravers. Mr. Maltravers, this is my host, Lord Doningdale."

The two gentlemen bowed, the rest of the cavalcade surrounded the trio, and Lord Doningdale, with a stately yet frank courtesy, invited Maltravers to return with the party to his house, which was about four miles distant. As may be supposed, Ernest readily accepted the invitation. The cavalcade proceeded, and Maltravers hastened to seek an explanation from Valerie. It was soon given. Madame de Ventadour had a younger sister who had lately married a son of Lord Doningdale. The marriage had been solemnized in Paris, and Monsieur and Madame de Ventadour had been in England a week on a visit to the English peer.

The *rencontre* was so sudden and unexpected that neither

recovered sufficient self-possession for fluent conversation. The explanation given, Valerie sank into a thoughtful silence, and Maltravers rode by her side equally taciturn, pondering on the strange chance which, after the lapse of years, had thrown them again together.

Lord Doningdale, who at first lingered with his other visitors, now joined them, and Maltravers was struck with his highbred manner, and a singular and somewhat elaborate polish in his emphasis and expression. They soon entered a noble park, which attested far more care and attention than are usually bestowed upon those demesnes so peculiarly English. Young plantations everywhere contrasted the venerable groves, new cottages of picturesque design adorned the outskirts, and obelisks and columns, copied from the antique and evidently of recent workmanship, gleamed upon them as they neared the house,—a large pile, in which the fashion of Queen Anne's day had been altered into the French roofs and windows of the architecture of the Tuileries. "You reside much in the country, I am sure, my lord," said Maltravers.

"Yes," replied Lord Doningdale, with a pensive air, "this place is greatly endeared to me. Here his Majesty Louis XVIII., when in England, honoured me with an annual visit. In compliment to him, I sought to model my poor mansion into an humble likeness of his own palace, so that he might as little as possible miss the rights he had lost. His own rooms were furnished exactly like those he had occupied at the Tuileries. Yes, the place is endeared to me; I think of the old times with pride. It is something to have sheltered a Bourbon in his misfortunes."

"It cost milord a vast sum to make these alterations," said Madame de Ventadour, glancing archly at Maltravers.

"Ah, yes," said the old lord, and his face, lately elated, became overcast,— "nearly three hundred thousand pounds. But what then? '*Les souvenirs, Madame, sont sans prix!*'"

"Have you visited Paris since the restoration, Lord Doningdale?" asked Maltravers.

His lordship looked at him sharply, and then turned his eye to Madame de Ventadour.

"Nay," said Valerie, laughing, "I did not dictate the question."

"Yes," said Lord Doningdale, "I have been at Paris."

"His Majesty must have been delighted to return your Lordship's hospitality."

Lord Doningdale looked a little embarrassed, and made no reply, but put his horse into a canter.

"You have galled our host," said Valerie, smiling. "Louis XVIII. and his friends lived here as long as they pleased and as sumptuously as they could; their visits half ruined the owner, who is the model of a *gentilhomme* and *preux chevalier*. He went to Paris to witness their triumph; he expected, I fancy, the order of the Saint Esprit. Lord Doningdale has royal blood in his veins. His Majesty asked him once to dinner, and when he took leave, said to him, 'We are happy, Lord Doningdale, to have *thus* requited our obligations to your Lordship.' Lord Doningdale went back in dudgeon, yet he still boasts of his *souvenirs*, poor man."

"Princes are not grateful, neither are republics," said Maltravers.

"Ah! who is grateful," rejoined Valerie, "except a dog and a woman?"

Maltravers found himself ushered into a vast dressing-room, and was informed by a French valet that in the country Lord Doningdale dined at six; the first bell would ring in a few minutes. While the valet was speaking, Lord Doningdale himself entered the room. His Lordship had learned, in the meanwhile, that Maltravers was of the great and ancient commoners' house whose honours were centred in his brother; and yet more, that he was the Mr. Maltravers whose writings every one talked of, whether for praise or abuse. Lord Doningdale had the two characteristics of a highbred gentleman of the old school,—respect for birth, and respect for talent; he was, therefore, more than ordinarily courteous to Ernest, and pressed him to stay some days with so much cordiality that Maltravers could not but assent. His travelling toilet was scanty, but Maltravers thought little of dress.

CHAPTER VIII.

It is the soul that sees. The outward eyes
Present the object, but the mind descries;
And thence delight, disgust, or cool indifference rise.

CRABBE.

WHEN Maltravers entered the enormous saloon, hung with damask and decorated with the ponderous enrichments and furniture of the time of Louis XIV. (that most showy and barbarous of all tastes, which has nothing in it of the graceful, nothing of the picturesque, and which, nowadays, people who should know better imitate with a ludicrous servility), he found sixteen persons assembled. His host stepped up from a circle which surrounded him, and formally presented his new visitor to the rest. He was struck with the likeness which the sister of Valerie bore to Valerie herself; but it was a sobered and chastened likeness, less handsome, less impressive. Mrs. George Herbert—such was the name she now owned—was a pretty, shrinking, timid girl, fond of her husband, and mightily awed by her father-in-law. Maltravers sat by her, and drew her into conversation. He could not help pitying the poor lady when he found she was to live altogether at Doningdale Park, remote from all the friends and habits of her childhood, alone, so far as the affections were concerned, with a young husband who was, passionately fond of field-sports, and who, from the few words Ernest exchanged with him, seemed to have only three ideas,—his dogs, his horses, and his wife. Alas! the last would soon be the least in importance. It is a sad position,—that of a lively young Frenchwoman entombed in an English country house! Marriages with foreigners are seldom fortunate experiments. But Ernest's attention was soon diverted from the sister by the entrance of Valerie herself, leaning on her husband's arm.

Hitherto he had not very minutely observed what change time had effected in her,—perhaps he was half afraid. He now gazed at her with curious interest. Valerie was still extremely handsome, but her face had grown sharper, her form thinner and more angular; there was something in her eye and lip discontented, restless, almost querulous: such is the too-common expression in the face of those born to love, and condemned to be indifferent. The little sister was more to be envied of the two: come what may, she loved her husband, such as he was, and her heart might ache, but it was not with a void.

M. de Ventadour soon shuffled up to Maltravers, his nose longer than ever.

"*Hein, hein*, how d'ye do, how d'ye do? Charmed to see you. Saw Madame before me, *hein, hein!* I suspect, I suspect—"

"Mr. Maltravers, will you give Madame de Ventadour your arm?" said Lord Doningdale, as he stalked on to the dining-room with a duchess on his own.

"And you have left Naples," said Maltravers,— "left it for good?"

"We do not think of returning."

"It was a charming place. How I loved it! How well I remember it!" Ernest spoke calmly; it was but a general remark.

Valerie sighed gently.

During dinner the conversation between Maltravers and Madame de Ventadour was vague and embarrassed. Ernest was no longer in love with her,—he had outgrown that youthful fancy. She had exercised influence over him,—the new influences that he had created had chased away her image. Such is life. Long absences extinguish all the false lights, though not the true ones. The lamps are dead in the banquet-room of yesterday; but a thousand years hence, and the stars we look on to-night will burn as brightly. Maltravers was no longer in love with Valerie. But Valerie—ah, perhaps *hers* had been true love!

Maltravers was surprised when he came to examine the

state of his own feelings; he was surprised to find that his pulse did not beat quicker at the touch of one whose very glance had once thrilled him to the soul,—he was surprised, but rejoiced. He was no longer anxious to seek, but to shun excitement, and he was a better and a higher being than he had been on the shores of Naples.

CHAPTER IX.

WHENCE that low voice, a whisper from the heart,
That told of days long past? — WORDSWORTH.

ERNEST stayed several days at Lord Doningdale's, and every day he rode out with Valerie, but it was with a large party; and every evening he conversed with her, but the whole world might have overheard what they said. In fact, the sympathy that had once existed between the young dreamer and the proud, discontented woman had in much passed away. Awakened to vast and grand objects, Maltravers was a dreamer no more. Inured to the life of trifles she had once loathed, Valerie had settled down into the usages and thoughts of the common world; she had no longer the superiority of earthly wisdom over Maltravers, and his romance was sobered in its eloquence, and her ear dulled to its tone. Still Ernest felt a deep interest in her, and still she seemed to feel a sensitive pride in his career.

One evening Maltravers had joined a circle in which Madame de Ventadour, with more than her usual animation, presided, and to which, in her pretty, womanly, and thoroughly French way, she was lightly laying down the law on a hundred subjects,—Philosophy, Poetry, Sèvres china, and the balance of power in Europe. Ernest listened to her, delighted, but not enchanted. Yet Valerie was not natural that night,—she was speaking from forced spirits.

"Well," said Madame de Ventadour at last, tired, perhaps, of the part she had been playing, and bringing to a sudden close an animated description of the then French court,— "well, see now if we ought not to be ashamed of ourselves; our talk has positively interrupted the music. Did you see Lord Doningdale stop it with a bow to me, as much as to say, with his courtly reproof, 'It shall not disturb you, madam' ? I will no longer be accessory to your crime of bad taste !"

With this the Frenchwoman rose, and gliding through the circle, retired to the farther end of the room. Ernest followed her with his eyes. Suddenly she beckoned to him, and he approached and seated himself by her side.

"Mr. Maltravers," said Valerie then, with great sweetness in her voice, "I have not yet expressed to you the delight I have felt from your genius. In absence you have suffered me to converse with you; your books have been to me dear friends. As we shall soon part again, let me now tell you of this frankly and without compliment."

This paved the way to a conversation that approached more on the precincts of the past than any they had yet known. But Ernest was guarded, and Valerie watched his words and looks with an interest she could not conceal,—an interest that partook of disappointment.

"It is an excitement," said Valerie, "to climb a mountain, though it fatigue, and though the clouds may even deny us a prospect from its summit; it is an excitement that gives a very universal pleasure, and that seems almost as if it were the result of a common human instinct which makes us desire to rise,—to get above the ordinary thoroughfares and level of life. Some such pleasure you must have in intellectual ambition, in which the mind is the upward traveller."

"It is not the *ambition* that pleases," replied Maltravers, "it is the following a path congenial to our tastes and made dear to us in a short time by habit. The moments in which we look beyond our work, and fancy ourselves seated beneath the Everlasting Laurel, are few. It is the work itself, whether of action or literature, that interests and excites us. And at length the dryness of toil takes the familiar sweet-

ness of custom. But in intellectual labour there is another charm,—we become more intimate with our own nature. The heart and the soul grow friends, as it were, and the affections and the aspirations unite. Thus, we are never without society, we are never alone; all that we have read, learned, and discovered, is company to us. This is pleasant,” added Maltravers, “to those who have no dear connections in the world without.”

“And is that your case?” asked Valerie, with a timid smile.

“Alas, yes! and since I conquered one affection, Madame de Ventadour, I almost think I have outlived the capacity of loving. I believe that when we cultivate very largely the reason or the imagination, we blunt, to a certain extent, our young susceptibilities to the fair impressions of real life. From ‘idleness,’ says the old Roman poet, ‘Love feeds his torch.’”

“You are too young to talk thus.”

“I speak as I feel.”

Valerie said no more. Shortly afterwards Lord Doningdale approached them, and proposed that they should make an excursion the next day to see the ruins of an old abbey some few miles distant.

CHAPTER X.

If I should meet thee

After long years,

How shall I greet thee? — BYRON.

It was a smaller party than usual the next day, consisting only of Lord Doningdale, his son George Herbert, Valerie, and Ernest. They were returning from the ruins, and the sun, now gradually approaching the west, threw its slant rays over the gardens and houses of a small, picturesque town, or, perhaps, rather village, on the high North Road. It is



EVERY DAY HE RODE OUT WITH VALERIE.



one of the prettiest places in England, that town or village, and boasts an excellent old-fashioned inn, with a large and quaint pleasure-garden. It was through the long and straggling street that our little party slowly rode, when the sky became suddenly overcast, and, a few large hailstones falling, gave notice of an approaching storm.

"I told you we should not get safely through the day," said George Herbert. "Now we are in for it."

"George, that is a vulgar expression," said Lord Doningdale, buttoning up his coat. While he spoke, a vivid flash of lightning darted across their very path, and the sky grew darker and darker.

"We may as well rest at the inn," said Maltravers; "the storm is coming on apace, and Madame de Ventadour —"

"You are right," interrupted Lord Doningdale; and he put his horse into a canter.

They were soon at the door of the old hotel. Bells rang, dogs barked, hostlers ran. A plain, dark, travelling post-chariot was before the inn-door; and roused, perhaps, by the noise below, a lady in the "first-floor front, No. 2," came to the window. This lady owned the travelling-carriage, and was at this time alone in that apartment. As she looked carelessly at the party, her eyes rested on one form: she turned pale, uttered a faint cry, and fell senseless on the floor.

Meanwhile, Lord Doningdale and his guests were shown into the room next to that tenanted by the lady. Properly speaking, both the rooms made one long apartment for balls and county meetings, and the division was formed by a thin partition removable at pleasure. The hail now came on fast and heavy; the trees groaned, the thunder roared, and in the large, dreary room there was a palpable and oppressive sense of coldness and discomfort. Valerie shivered, a fire was lighted, and the Frenchwoman drew near to it.

"You are wet, my dear lady," said Lord Doningdale. "You should take off that close habit and have it dried."

"Oh, no! What matters it?" said Valerie bitterly, and almost rudely.

"It matters everything," said Ernest; "pray be ruled."

"And do you care for me?" murmured Valerie.

"Can you ask that question?" replied Ernest, in the same tone, and with affectionate and friendly warmth.

Meanwhile the good old lord had summoned the chambermaid, and with the kindly imperiousness of a father made Valerie quit the room. The three gentlemen, left together, talked of the storm, wondered how long it would last, and debated the propriety of sending to Doningdale for the carriage. While they spoke, the hail suddenly ceased, though clouds in the distant horizon were bearing heavily up to renew the charge. George Herbert, who was the most impatient of mortals, especially of rainy weather in a strange place, seized the occasion, and insisted on riding to Doningdale and sending back the carriage.

"Surely a groom would do as well, George," said the father.

"My dear father, no; I should envy the rogue too much. I am bored to death here. Marie will be frightened about us. Brown Bess will take me back in twenty minutes. I am a hardy fellow, you know. Good-by."

Away darted the young sportsman, and in two minutes they saw him spur gayly from the inn-door.

"It is very odd that *I* should have such a son," said Lord Doningdale, musingly,— "a son who cannot amuse himself in-doors for two minutes together. I took great pains with his education, too. Strange that people should weary so much of themselves that they cannot brave the prospect of a few minutes passed in reflection; that a shower and the resources of their own thoughts are evils so galling,—very strange indeed. But it is a confounded climate this, certainly. I wonder when it will clear up."

Thus muttering, Lord Doningdale walked, or rather marched, to and fro the room, with his hands in his coat-pockets, and his whip sticking perpendicularly out of the right one. Just at this moment the waiter came to announce that his lordship's groom was without, and desired much to see him. Lord Doningdale had then the pleasure of learning that his

favourite gray hackney, which he had ridden, winter and summer, for fifteen years, was taken with shivers, and, as the groom expressed it, seemed to have "the collar [cholera?] in its bowels!"

Lord Doningdale turned pale, and hurried to the stables without saying a word.

Maltravers, who, plunged in thought, had not overheard the low and brief conference between master and groom, remained alone, seated by the fire, his head buried in his bosom, and his arms folded.

Meanwhile, the lady, who occupied the adjoining chamber, had recovered slowly from her swoon. She put both hands to her temples, as if trying to recollect her thoughts. Hers was a fair, innocent, almost childish face; and now, as a smile shot across it, there was something so sweet and touching in the gladness it shed over that countenance that you could not have seen it without strong and almost painful interest. For it was the gladness of a person who has known sorrow. Suddenly she started up, and said: "No, then. I do not dream. He is come back,—he is here; all will be well again! Ha! it is his voice. Oh, bless him, it is *his* voice!" She paused, her finger on her lip, her face bent down. A low and indistinct sound of voices reached her straining ear through the thin door that divided her from Maltravers. She listened intently, but she could not overhear the import. Her heart beat violently. "He is not alone!" she murmured mournfully. "I will wait till the sound ceases, and then I will venture in!"

And what was the conversation carried on in that chamber? We must return to Ernest. He was sitting in the same thoughtful posture when Madame de Ventadour returned.

The Frenchwoman coloured when she found herself alone with Ernest, and Ernest himself was not at his ease.

"Herbert has gone home to order the carriage, and Lord Doningdale has disappeared, I scarce know whither. You do not, I trust, feel the worse for the rain?"

"No," said Valerie.

"Shall you have any commands in London?" asked Maltravers; "I return to town to-morrow."

"So soon!" and Valerie sighed. "Ah!" she added, after a pause, "we shall not meet again for years, perhaps. M. de Ventadour is to be appointed ambassador to the — Court, and so, and so — Well, it is no matter. What has become of the friendship we once swore to each other?"

"It is here," said Maltravers, laying his hand on his heart. "Here, at least, lies the half of that friendship which was my charge; and more than friendship, Valerie de Ventadour,— respect, admiration, gratitude. At a time of life when passion and fancy, most strong, might have left me an idle and worthless voluptuary, you convinced me that the world has virtue, and that woman is too noble to be our toy,— the idol of to-day, the victim of to-morrow. Your influence, Valerie, left me a more thoughtful man,— I hope a better one."

"Oh!" said Madame de Ventadour, strongly affected, "I bless you for what you tell me; you cannot know, you cannot guess, how sweet it is to me! Now I recognize you once more. What— what did my resolution cost me! Now I am repaid!"

Ernest was moved by her emotion and by his own remembrances; he took her hand, and pressing it with frank and respectful tenderness, "I did not think, Valerie," said he, "when I reviewed the past, I did not think that you loved me,— I was not vain enough for that; but if so, how much is your character raised in my eyes,— how provident, how wise your virtue! Happier and better for both, our present feelings, each to each, than if we had indulged a brief and guilty dream of passion, at war with all that leaves passion without remorse, and bliss without alloy. Now —"

"Now," interrupted Valerie, quickly, and fixing on him her dark eyes — "now you love me no longer! Yet it is better so. Well, I will go back to my cold and cheerless state of life, and forget once more that Heaven endowed me with a heart!"

"Ah, Valerie! esteemed, revered, still beloved, not indeed with the fires of old, but with a deep, undying, and holy tenderness, speak not thus to me. Let me not believe you unhappy; let me think that, wise, sagacious, brilliant as you

are, you have employed your gifts to reconcile yourself to a common lot. Still let me look up to you when I would despise the circles in which you live, and say: 'On that pedestal an altar is yet placed to which the heart may bring the offerings of the soul.'"

"It is in vain, in vain that I struggle," said Valerie, half-choked with emotion, and clasping her hands passionately. "Ernest, I love you still; I am wretched to think you love me no more; I would give you nothing, yet I exact all. My youth is going, my beauty dimmed, my very intellect is dulled by the life I lead; and yet I ask from you that which your young heart once felt for me. Despise me, Maltravers, I am not what I seemed; I am a hypocrite,—despise me."

"No," said Ernest, again possessing himself of her hand, and falling on his knee by her side. "No, never-to-be-forgotten, ever-to-be-honoured Valerie, hear me." As he spoke, he kissed the hand he held; with the other, Valerie covered her face and wept bitterly, but in silence. Ernest paused till the burst of her feelings had subsided, her hand still in his, still warmed by his kisses,—kisses as pure as cavalier ever impressed on the hand of his queen.

At this time the door communicating with the next room gently opened. A fair form—a form fairer and younger than that of Valerie de Ventadour—entered the apartment; the silence had deceived her,—she believed that Maltravers was alone. She had entered with her heart upon her lips,—love, sanguine, hopeful love, in every vein, in every thought; she had entered dreaming that across that threshold life would dawn upon her afresh, that all would be once more as it had been, when the common air was rapture. Thus she entered; and now she stood spell-bound, terror-stricken, pale as death,—life turned to stone; youth, hope, bliss, were forever over to her! Ernest kneeling to another was all she saw! For this had she been faithful and true amidst storm and desolation; for this had she hoped, dreamed, lived. They did not note her; she was unseen, unheard. And Ernest, who would have gone barefoot to the end of the earth to find her, was in the very room with her, and knew it not!

"Call me again *beloved!*" said Valerie, very softly.

"Beloved Valerie, hear me."

These words were enough for the listener; she turned noiselessly away: humble as that heart was, it was proud. The door closed on her. She had obtained the wish of her whole being; Heaven had heard her prayer,—she had once more seen the lover of her youth; and thenceforth all was night and darkness to her. What matter what became of her? One moment,—what an effect it produces upon years! **ONE MOMENT!** Virtue, crime, glory, shame, woe, rapture, rest upon moments! Death itself is but a moment, yet Eternity is its successor!

"Hear me!" continued Ernest, unconscious of what had passed,—“hear me; let us be what human nature and worldly forms seldom allow those of opposite sexes to be,—friends to each other, and to virtue also; friends through time and absence; friends through all the vicissitudes of life; friends on whose affection shame and remorse never cast a shade; friends who are to meet hereafter! Oh, there is no attachment so true, no tie so holy, as that which is founded on the old chivalry of loyalty and honour, and which is what love would be if the heart and the soul were unadulterated by clay.”

There was in Ernest's countenance an expression so noble, in his voice a tone so thrilling, that Valerie was brought back at once to the nature which a momentary weakness had subdued. She looked at him with an admiring and grateful gaze, and then said, in a calm but low voice: “Ernest, I understand you; yes, your friendship is dearer to me than love.”

At this time they heard the voice of Lord Doningdale on the stairs. Valerie turned away. Maltravers, as he rose, extended his hand; she pressed it warmly, and the spell was broken, the temptation conquered, the ordeal passed. While Lord Doningdale entered the room, the carriage, with Herbert in it, drove to the door. In a few minutes the little party were within the vehicle. As they drove away, the hostlers were harnessing the horses to the dark-green travelling-carriage. From the window, a sad and straining eye gazed

upon the gayer equipage of the peer,—that eye which Maltravers would have given his whole fortune to meet again. But he did not look up; and Alice Darvil turned away, and her fate was fixed!

CHAPTER XI.

STRANGE fits of passion I have known,
And I will dare to tell. — WORDSWORTH.

. . . The food of hope
Is meditated action. — WORDSWORTH.

MALTRAVERS left Doningdale the next day. He had no further conversation with Valerie; but when he took leave of her, she placed in his hand a letter, which he read as he rode slowly through the beech avenues of the park. Translated, it ran thus:—

“Others would despise me for the weakness I showed, but you will not! It is the sole weakness of a life. None can know what I have passed through, what hours of dejection and gloom,—I, whom so many envy! Better to have been a peasant girl, with love, than a queen whose life is but a dull mechanism. You, Maltravers, I never forgot in absence, and your image made yet more wearisome and trite the things around me. Years passed, and your name was suddenly on men’s lips. I heard of you wherever I went,—I could not shut you from me. Your fame was as if you were conversing by my side. We met at last, suddenly and unexpectedly. I saw that you loved me no more, and that thought conquered all my resolves: anguish subdues the nerves of the mind as sickness those of the body. And thus I forgot, and humbled, and might have undone myself. Juster and better thoughts are once more awakened within me, and when we meet again I shall be worthy of your respect. I see how dangerous are that luxury of thought, that sin of discontent which I indulged. I go back to life resolved to vanquish all that can interfere with its claims and duties. Heaven guide and preserve you, Ernest! Think of me as one whom you will not blush to have loved, whom you will not blush hereafter to present to your wife. With so much that is soft, as well as great within you, you were not formed like me,—to be alone. Farewell!”

Maltravers read and re-read this letter; and when he reached his home, he placed it carefully amongst the things he most valued. A lock of Alice's hair lay beside it: he did not think that either was dishonoured by the contact.

With an effort, he turned himself once more to those stern yet high connections which literature makes with real life. Perhaps there was a certain restlessness in his heart which induced him ever to occupy his mind. That was one of the busiest years of his life,—the one in which he did most to sharpen jealousy and confirm fame.

CHAPTER XII.

IN effect, he entered my apartment. — *Gil Blas*.

"I am surprised," said he, "at the caprice of Fortune, who sometimes delights in loading an execrable author with favours, whilst she leaves good writers to perish for want." — *Gil Blas*.

It was just twelve months after his last interview with Valerie, and Madame de Ventadour had long since quitted England, when one morning, as Maltravers sat alone in his study, Castruccio Cesarini was announced.

"Ah, my dear Castruccio, how are you?" cried Maltravers, eagerly, as the opening door presented the form of the Italian.

"Sir," said Castruccio, with great stiffness, and speaking in French, which was his wont when he meant to be distant, — "sir, I do not come to renew our former acquaintance: you are a great man [here a bitter sneer], I an obscure one [here Castruccio drew himself up]; I only come to discharge a debt to you which I find I have incurred."

"What tone is this, Castruccio, and what debt do you speak of?"

"On my arrival in town yesterday," said the poet, solemnly, "I went to the man whom you deputed some years since to publish my little volume, to demand an account of its

success; and I found that it had cost one hundred and twenty pounds, deducting the sale of forty-nine copies which had been sold. *Your* books sell some thousands, I am told. It is well contrived,—mine fell still-born; no pains were taken with it. No matter [a wave of the hand]. You discharged this debt, I repay you: there is a check for the money. Sir, I have done! I wish you a good day, and health to enjoy *your* reputation."

"Why, Cesarini, this is folly."

"Sir —"

"Yes, it is folly; for there is no folly equal to that of throwing away friendship in a world where friendship is so rare. You insinuate that I am to blame for any neglect which your work experienced. Your publisher can tell you that I was more anxious about your book than I have ever been about my own."

"And the proof is that forty-nine copies were sold!"

"Sit down, Castruccio, sit down and listen to reason;" and Maltravers proceeded to explain and soothe and console. He reminded the poor poet that his verses were written in a foreign tongue; that even English poets of great fame enjoyed but a limited sale for their works; that it was impossible to make the avaricious public purchase what the stupid public would not take an interest in,—in short, he used all those arguments which naturally suggested themselves as best calculated to convince and soften Castruccio; and he did this with so much evident sympathy and kindness that at length the Italian could no longer justify his own resentment. A reconciliation took place, sincere on the part of Maltravers, hollow on the part of Cesarini; for the disappointed author could not forgive the successful one.

"And how long shall you stay in London?"

"Some months."

"Send for your luggage, and be my guest."

"No; I have taken lodgings that suit me. I am formed for solitude."

"While you stay here, you will, however, go into the world."

"Yes, I have some letters of introduction, and I hear that the English can honour merit, even in an Italian."

"You hear the truth, and it will amuse you, at least, to see our eminent men. They will receive you most hospitably. Let me assist you as a cicerone."

"Oh, your *valuable* time!"

"Is at your disposal; but where are you going?"

"It is Sunday, and I have had my curiosity excited to hear a celebrated preacher, Mr. —, who, they tell me, is now more talked of than *any author* in London."

"They tell you truly; I will go with you,—I myself have not yet heard him, but proposed to do so this very day."

"Are you not jealous of a man so much spoken of?"

"Jealous! Why, I never set up for a popular preacher,—*ce n'est pas mon métier!*"

"If I were a *successful* author, I should be jealous if the dancing-dogs were talked of."

"No, my dear Cesarini, I am sure you would not. You are a little irritated at present by natural disappointment; but the man who has as much success as he deserves, is never morbidly jealous, even of a rival in his own line. Want of success sours us; but a little sunshine smiles away the vapours. Come, we have no time to lose."

Maltravers took his hat, and the two young men bent their way to — Chapel. Cesarini still retained the singular fashion of his dress, though it was now made of handsomer materials, and worn with more coxcombry and pretension. He had much improved in person; had been admired in Paris, and told that he looked like a man of genius; and with his black ringlets flowing over his shoulders, his long mustache, his broad, Spanish-shaped hat, and eccentric garb, he certainly did not look like other people. He smiled with contempt at the plain dress of his companion. "I see," said he, "that you follow the fashion, and look as if you passed your life with *élégans* instead of students. I wonder you condescend to such trifles as fashionably shaped hats and coats."

"It would be worse trifling to set up for originality in hats

and coats, at least in sober England. I was born a gentleman, and I dress my outward frame like others of my order. Because I am a writer, why should I affect to be different from other men?"

"I see that you are not above the weakness of your countryman Congreve," said Cesarini, "who deemed it finer to be a gentleman than an author."

"I always thought that anecdote misconstrued. Congreve had a proper and manly pride, to my judgment, when he expressed a dislike to be visited merely as a raree-show."

"But is it policy to let the world see that an author is like other people? Would he not create a deeper personal interest if he showed that even in person alone he was unlike the herd? He ought to be seen seldom,—not to stale his presence,—and to resort to the arts that belong to the royalty of intellect as well as the royalty of birth."

"I dare say an author, by a little charlatanism of that nature, might be more talked of,—might be more adored in the boarding-schools, and make a better picture in the exhibition. But I think, if his mind be manly, he would lose in self-respect at every quackery of the sort. And my philosophy is, that to respect oneself is worth all the fame in the world."

Cesarini sneered, and shrugged his shoulders; it was quite evident that the two authors had no sympathy with each other.

They arrived at last at the chapel, and with some difficulty procured seats.

Presently the service began. The preacher was a man of unquestionable talent and fervid eloquence; but his theatrical arts, his affected dress, his artificial tones and gestures, and, above all, the fanatical mummeries which he introduced into the House of God, disgusted Maltravers, while they charmed, entranced, and awed Cesarini. The one saw a mountebank and impostor,—the other recognized a profound artist and an inspired prophet.

But while the discourse was drawing towards a close, while the preacher was in one of his most eloquent bursts,—the ohs! and ahs! of which were the grand prelude to the pathetic peroration,—the dim outline of a female form in the

distance riveted the eyes and absorbed the thoughts of Maltravers. The chapel was darkened, though it was broad daylight; and the face of the person that attracted Ernest's attention was concealed by her head-dress and veil. But that bend of the neck, so simply graceful, so humbly modest, recalled to his heart but one image. Every one has, perhaps, observed that there is a physiognomy (if the bull may be pardoned) of *form* as well as face, which it rarely happens that two persons possess in common. And this, with most, is peculiarly marked in the turn of the head, the outline of the shoulders, and the ineffable something that characterizes the postures of each individual in repose. The more intently he gazed, the more firmly Ernest was persuaded that he saw before him the long-lost, the never-to-be-forgotten mistress of his boyish days and his first love. On one side of the lady in question sat an elderly gentleman, whose eyes were fixed upon the preacher; on the other, a beautiful little girl, with long, fair ringlets, and that cast of features which, from its exquisite delicacy and expressive mildness painters and poets call the "angelic." These persons appeared to belong to the same party. Maltravers literally trembled, so great were his impatience and agitation. Yet still, the dress of the supposed likeness of Alice, the appearance of her companions, were so evidently above the ordinary rank that Ernest scarcely ventured to yield to the suggestions of his own heart. Was it possible that the daughter of Luke Darvil, thrown upon the wide world, could have risen so far beyond her circumstances and station? At length the moment came when he might resolve his doubts; the discourse was concluded, the extemporaneous prayer was at an end, the congregation broke up, and Maltravers pushed his way as well as he could through the dense and serried crowd. But every moment some vexatious obstruction, in the shape of a fat gentleman or three close-wedged ladies, intercepted his progress. He lost sight of the party in question amidst the profusion of tall bonnets and waving plumes. He arrived at last, breathless and pale as death (so great was the struggle within him), at the door of the chapel. He arrived in time to see a plain carriage, with

servants in gray undress liveries, driving from the porch, and caught a glimpse, within the vehicle, of the golden ringlets of a child. He darted forward, he threw himself almost before the horses. The coachman drew in, and with an angry exclamation very much like an oath whipped his horses aside and went off. But that momentary pause sufficed. "It is she, it is! Oh, Heaven, it is Alice!" murmured Maltravers. The whole place reeled before his eyes, and he clung, overpowered and unconscious, to a neighbouring lamp-post for support. But he recovered himself with an agonizing effort as the thought struck upon his heart that he was about to lose sight of her again forever, and he rushed forward, like one frantic, in pursuit of the carriage. But there was a vast crowd of other carriages, besides stream upon stream of foot-passengers, for the great and the gay resorted to that place of worship as a fashionable excitement in a dull day; and after a weary and a dangerous chase, in which he had been nearly run over three times, Maltravers halted at last, exhausted and in despair. Every succeeding Sunday, for months, he went to the same chapel, but in vain; in vain, too, he resorted to every public haunt of dissipation and amusement. Alice Darvil he beheld no more!

CHAPTER XIII.

TELL me, sir,

Have you cast up your state, rated your land,
And find it able to endure the charge?

The Noble Gentleman.

By degrees, as Maltravers sobered down from the first shock of that unexpected meeting, and from the prolonged disappointment that followed it, he became sensible of a strange kind of happiness or contentment. Alice was not in poverty, she was not eating the unhallowed bread of vice, or earning

the bitter wages of laborious penury. He saw her in reputable, nay, opulent, circumstances. A dark nightmare, that had often, amidst the pleasures of youth or the triumphs of literature, weighed upon his breast, was removed. He breathed more freely, he could sleep in peace. His conscience could no longer say to him, "She who slept upon thy bosom is a wanderer upon the face of the earth, exposed to every temptation, perishing perhaps for want." That single sight of Alice had been like the apparition of the injured Dead conjured up at Heraclea, whose sight could pacify the aggressor and exorcise the spectres of remorse; he was reconciled with himself, and walked on to the Future with a bolder step and a statelier crest. Was she married to that staid and sober-looking personage whom he had beheld with her? Was that child the offspring of their union? He almost hoped so,—it was better to lose than to destroy her. Poor Alice! could she have dreamed, when she sat at his feet gazing up into his eyes, that a time would come when Maltravers would thank Heaven for the belief that she was happy with another?

Ernest Maltravers now felt a new man; the relief of conscience operated on the efforts of his genius. A more buoyant and elastic spirit entered into them,—they seemed to breathe as with a second youth.

Meanwhile Cesarini threw himself into the fashionable world, and to his own surprise was fêted and caressed. In fact, Castruccio was exactly the sort of person to be made a lion of. The letters of introduction that he had brought from Paris were addressed to those great personages in England between whom and personages equally great in France politics makes a bridge of connection. Cesarini appeared to them as an accomplished young man, brother-in-law to a distinguished member of the French Chamber. Maltravers, on the other hand, introduced him to the literary *dilettanti* who admire all authors that are not rivals. The singular costume of Cesarini, which would have revolted persons in an Englishman, enchanted them in an Italian. He looked, they said, like a poet. Ladies like to have verses written to them, and Cesarini, who talked very little, made up for it by scrib-

bling eternally. The young man's head soon grew filled with comparisons between himself in London and Petrarch at Avignon. As he had always thought that fame was in the gift of lords and ladies, and had no idea of the multitude, he fancied himself already famous; and since one of his strongest feelings was his jealousy of Maltravers, he was delighted at being told he was a much more interesting creature than that haughty personage, who wore his neckcloth like other people, and had not even those indispensable attributes of genius,—black curls and a sneer. Fine society, which, as Madame de Staël well says, depraves the frivolous mind and braces the strong one, completed the ruin of all that was manly in Cesarini's intellect. He soon learned to limit his desire of effect or distinction to gilded saloons, and his vanity contented itself upon the scraps and morsels from which the lion heart of true ambition turns in disdain. But this was not all. Cesarini was envious of the greater affluence of Maltravers. His own fortune was in a small capital of eight or nine thousand pounds; but thrown in the midst of the wealthiest society in Europe, he could not bear to sacrifice a single claim upon its esteem. He began to talk of the satiety of wealth, and young ladies listened to him with remarkable interest when he did so; he obtained the reputation of riches: he was too vain not to be charmed with it. He endeavoured to maintain the claim by adopting the extravagant excesses of the day. He bought horses, he gave away jewels, he made love to a marchioness of forty-two who was very kind to him and very fond of *écarté*, he gambled; he was in the high road to destruction.

BOOK VI.

Εἴποις ἄν, ὥς ὁ χρυσοῦς ἐκ νικᾷ τάδε
Πλουτεῖν τε τερπνόν. — EURIPIDES *Ion*. line 641.

"Perchance you say that gold's the arch-exceller,
And to be rich is sweet?"

. . . κείνο δ' οὐκ ἀνασχετόν
Εἴκειν ὁδοῦ χαλῶντα τοῖς κακίοισιν. — *Ibid*, line 648.

. . . "T is not to be endured,
To yield our trodden path and turn aside,
Giving our place to knaves."

CHAPTER I.

L'ADRESSE et l'artifice ont passé dans mon cœur;
Qu'on a sous cet habit et d'esprit et de ruse.¹ — REGNARD.

It was a fine morning in July when a gentleman who had arrived in town the night before, after an absence from England of several years, walked slowly and musingly up the superb thoroughfare which connects the Regent's Park with St. James's.

He was a man who, with great powers of mind, had wasted his youth in a wandering, vagabond kind of life, but who had worn away the love of pleasure, and began to awaken to a sense of ambition.

"It is astonishing how this city is improved," said he to himself. "Everything gets on in this world with a little energy and bustle, and everybody as well as everything. My

¹ "Subtility and craft have taken possession of my heart; but under this habit one exhibits both shrewdness and wit."

old cronies, fellows not half so clever as I am, are all doing well. There's Tom Stevens, my very fag at Eton,—snivelling little dog he was too!—just made Under-Secretary of State. Pearson, whose longs and shorts I always wrote, is now head-master to the human longs and shorts of a public school,—editing Greek plays, and booked for a bishopric. Collier, I see by the papers, is leading his circuit, and Ernest Maltravers (but *he* had some talent) has made a name in the world. Here am I, worth them all put together, who have done nothing but spend half my little fortune in spite of all my economy. Egad! this must have an end. I must look to the main chance; and yet, just when I want his help the most, my worthy uncle thinks fit to marry again. Humph, I'm too good for this world."

While thus musing, the soliloquist came in direct personal contact with a tall gentleman who carried his head very high in the air and did not appear to see that he had nearly thrown our abstracted philosopher off his legs.

"Zounds, sir, what do you mean?" cried the latter.

"I beg your par—" began the other, meekly, when his arm was seized, and the injured man exclaimed,—

"Bless me, sir, is it indeed *you* whom I see?"

"Ha! Lumley?"

"The same; and how fares it, my dear uncle? I did not know you were in London. I only arrived last night. How well you are looking!"

"Why, yes, Heaven be praised, I am pretty well."

"And happy in your new ties? You must present me to Mrs. Templeton."

"Ehem!" said Mr. Templeton, clearing his throat, and with a slight but embarrassed smile, "I never thought I should marry again."

"'L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose,'" observed Lumley Ferrers, for it was he.

"Gently, my dear nephew," replied Mr. Templeton, gravely; "those phrases are somewhat sacrilegious,—I am an old-fashioned person, you know."

"Ten thousand apologies."

"One apology will suffice; these hyperboles of phrase are almost sinful."

"Confounded old prig!" thought Ferrers; but he bowed sanctimoniously.

"My dear uncle, I have been a wild fellow in my day, but with years comes reflection; and under your guidance, if I may hope for it, I trust to grow a wiser and a better man."

"It is well, Lumley," returned the uncle; "and I am very glad to see you returned to your own country. Will you dine with me to-morrow? I am living near Fulham. You had better bring your carpet-bag, and stay with me some days; you will be heartily welcome, especially if you can shift without a foreign servant. I have a great compassion for papists, but—"

"Oh, my dear uncle, do not fear! I am not rich enough to have a foreign servant, and have not travelled over three quarters of the globe without learning that it is possible to dispense with a valet."

"As to being rich enough," observed Mr. Templeton, with a calculating air, "seven hundred and ninety-five pounds ten shillings a year will allow a man to keep *two* servants, if he pleases; but I am glad to find you economical, at all events. We meet to-morrow, then, at six o'clock."

"*Au revoir*,—I mean, God bless you."

"Tiresome old gentleman that," muttered Ferrers, "and not so cordial as formerly; perhaps his wife is *enceinte*, and he is going to do me the injustice of having another heir. I must look to this; for without riches, I had better go back and live *au cinquième* at Paris."

With this conclusion, Lumley quickened his pace, and soon arrived at Seamore Place. In a few moments more he was in the library, well stored with books, and decorated with marble busts and images from the studios of Canova and Thorwaldsen.

"My master, sir, will be down immediately," said the servant who admitted him; and Ferrers threw himself on a sofa, and contemplated the apartment with an air half envious and half cynical.

Presently the door opened, and "My dear Ferrers!" "Well, *mon cher*, how are you?" were the salutations hastily exchanged.

After the first sentences of inquiry, gratulation, and welcome had cleared the way for more general conversation, "Well, Maltravers," said Ferrers, "so here we are together again, and after a lapse of so many years! Both older, certainly; and you, I suppose, wiser. At all events, people think you so,—and that's all that's important in the question. Why, man, you are looking as young as ever, only a little paler and thinner; but look at me,—I am not very *much* past thirty, and I am almost an old man: bald at the temples, crows' feet too, eh! Idleness ages one damnably."

"Pooh! Lumley, I never saw you look better. And are you really come to settle in England?"

"Yes, if I can afford it. But at my age, and after having seen so much, the life of an idle, obscure *garçon* does not content me. I feel that the world's opinion, which I used to despise, is growing necessary to me. I want to be something. What can I be? Don't look alarmed, I won't rival you. I dare say literary reputation is a fine thing, but I desire some distinction more substantial and worldly. You know your own county: give me a map of the roads to Power."

"To Power! Oh, nothing but law, politics, and riches."

"For law I am too old; politics, perhaps, might suit me: but riches, my dear Ernest,—ah, how I long for a good account with my banker!"

"Well, patience and hope. Are you not a rich uncle's heir?"

"I don't know," said Ferrers, very dolorously; "the old gentleman has married again, and may have a family."

"Married! To whom?"

"A widow, I hear. I know nothing more, except that she has a child already; so you see she has got into a cursed way of having children. And perhaps by the time I'm forty, I shall see a whole covey of cherubs flying away with the great Templeton property!"

"Ha, ha! Your despair sharpens your wit, Lumley. But

why not take a leaf out of your uncle's book, and marry yourself?"

"So I will when I can find an heiress. If that is what you meant to say, it is a more sensible suggestion than any I could have supposed to come from a man who writes books, especially poetry: and your advice is not to be despised. For rich I will be; and as the fathers (I don't mean of the Church, but in Horace) told of the rising generation, the first thing is to resolve to be rich,—it is only the second thing to consider how."

"Meanwhile, Ferrers, you will be my guest."

"I'll dine with you to-day; but to-morrow I am off to Fulham to be introduced to my aunt. Can't you fancy her? Gray *gros-de-Naples* gown; gold chain with an eye-glass; rather fat; two pugs and a parrot! 'Start not, this is fancy's sketch!' I have not yet seen the respectable relative with my physical optics. What shall we have for dinner? Let *me* choose,—you were always a bad caterer."

As Ferrers thus rattled on, Maltravers felt himself growing younger; old times and old adventures crowded fast upon him, and the two friends spent a most agreeable day together. It was only the next morning that Maltravers, in thinking over the various conversations that had passed between them, was forced reluctantly to acknowledge that the inert selfishness of Lumley Ferrers seemed now to have hardened into a resolute and systematic want of principle, which might, perhaps, make him a dangerous and designing man, if urged by circumstances into action.

CHAPTER II.

Dauph. Sir, I must speak to you. I have been long your despised kinsman.

Morose. Oh! what thou wilt, nephew. — *Epicene.*

Her silence is dowry eno', — exceedingly soft spoken; thrifty of her speech, that spends but six words a day. — *Epicene.*

THE coach dropped Mr. Ferrers at the gate of a villa about three miles from town. The lodge-keeper charged himself with the carpet-bag, and Ferrers strolled, with his hands behind him (it was his favourite mode of disposing of them), through the beautiful and elaborate pleasure-grounds.

“A very nice, snug little box (jointure-house, I suppose)! I would not grudge that, I'm sure, if I had but the rest. But here, I suspect, comes madam's first specimen of the art of having a family.” This last thought was extracted from Mr. Ferrers's contemplative brain by a lovely little girl, who came running up to him, fearless and spoilt as she was, and after indulging a tolerable stare, exclaimed, “Are you come to see Papa, sir?”

“Papa,— the deuce!” thought Lumley. “And who is Papa, my dear?”

“Why, Mamma's husband. He is not my Papa by rights.”

“Certainly not, my love; not by rights,— I comprehend.”

“Eh!”

“Yes, I am going to see your Papa by wrongs,— Mr. Templeton.”

“Oh! this way, then.”

“You are very fond of Mr. Templeton, my little angel?”

“To be sure I am. You have not seen the rocking-horse he is going to give me.”

“Not yet, sweet child! And how is Mamma?”

“Oh, poor dear Mamma!” said the child, with a sudden change of voice, and tears in her eyes. “Ah, she is not well!”

"In the family way, to a dead certainty!" muttered Ferrers, with a groan; "but here is my uncle. Horrid name! Uncles were always wicked fellows. Richard the Third and the man who did something or other to the babes in the wood were a joke to my hard-hearted old relation, who has robbed me with a widow! The lustful, lickerish old — My *dear* sir, I'm so glad to see you!"

Mr. Templeton, who was a man very cold in his manners, and always either looked over people's heads or down upon the ground, just touched his nephew's outstretched hand, and telling him he was welcome, observed that it was a very fine afternoon.

"Very, indeed. Sweet place, this! You see, by the way, that I have already made acquaintance with my fair cousin-in-law. She is very pretty."

"I really think she is," said Mr. Templeton, with some warmth, and gazing fondly at the child, who was now throwing buttercups up in the air, and trying to catch them. Mr. Ferrers wished in his heart that they had been brickbats!

"Is she like her mother?" asked the nephew

"Like whom, sir?"

"Her mother,— Mrs. Templeton."

"No, not very; there is an air, perhaps, but the likeness is not remarkably strong. Would you not like to go to your room before dinner?"

"Thank you. Can I not first be presented to Mrs. Tem —"

"She is at her devotions, Mr. Lumley," interrupted Mr. Templeton, grimly.

"The she-hypocrite!" thought Ferrers. "Oh, I am delighted that your pious heart has found so congenial a help-mate!"

"It is a great blessing, and I am grateful for it. This is the way to the house."

Lumley, now formally installed in a grave bedroom, with dimity curtains and dark-brown paper with light-brown stars on it, threw himself into a large chair, and yawned and stretched with as much fervour as if he could have yawned and stretched himself into his uncle's property. He then

slowly exchanged his morning dress for a quiet suit of black, and thanked his stars that, amidst all his sins, he had never been a dandy, and had never rejoiced in a fine waistcoat,—a criminal possession that he well knew would have entirely hardened his uncle's conscience against him. He tarried in his room till the second bell summoned him to descend; and then, entering the drawing-room, which had a cold look even in July, found his uncle standing by the mantelpiece, and a young, slight, handsome woman half-buried in a huge but not comfortable *fauteuil*.

"Your aunt, Mrs. Templeton,—madam, my nephew, Mr. Lumley Ferrers," said Templeton, with a wave of the hand. "John, dinner!"

"I hope I am not late!"

"No," said Templeton, gently, for he had always liked his nephew, and began now to thaw towards him a little on seeing that Lumley put a good face upon the new state of affairs.

"No, my dear boy, no; but I think order and punctuality cardinal virtues in a well-regulated family."

"Dinner, sir," said the butler, opening the folding-doors at the end of the room.

"Permit me," said Lumley, offering his arm to his aunt. "What a lovely place this is!"

Mrs. Templeton said something in reply, but what it was, Ferrers could not discover, so low and choked was the voice.

"Shy," thought he,— "odd for a widow! But that's the way those husband-buriers take us in!"

Plain as was the general furniture of the apartment, the natural ostentation of Mr. Templeton broke out in the massive value of the plate and the number of the attendants. He was a rich man, and he was proud of his riches; he knew it was respectable to be rich, and he thought it was moral to be respectable. As for the dinner, Lumley knew enough of his uncle's tastes to be prepared for viands and wines that even he (fastidious gourmand as he was) did not despise.

Between the intervals of eating, Mr. Ferrers endeavoured to draw his aunt into conversation; but he found all his ingenuity fail him. There was in the features of Mrs. Tem-

pleton an expression of deep but calm melancholy that would have saddened most persons to look upon, especially in one so young and lovely. It was evidently something beyond shyness or reserve that made her so silent and subdued, and even in her silence there was so much natural sweetness that Ferrers could not ascribe her manner to haughtiness or the desire to repel. He was rather puzzled. "For though," thought he, sensibly enough, "my uncle is not a youth, he is a very rich fellow; and how any widow who is married again to a rich old fellow can be melancholy, passes my understanding!"

Templeton, as if to draw attention from his wife's taciturnity, talked more than usual. He entered largely into politics, and regretted that in times so critical he was not in parliament.

"Did I possess your youth and your health, Lumley, I would not neglect my country. Popery is abroad."

"I myself should like very much to be in parliament," said Lumley, boldly.

"I dare say you would," returned the uncle, dryly. "Parliament is very expensive,—only fit for those who have a large stake in the country. Champagne to Mr. Ferrers."

Lumley bit his lip, and spoke little during the rest of the dinner. Mr. Templeton, however, waxed gracious by the time the dessert was on the table, and began cutting up a pineapple, with many assurances to Lumley that gardens were nothing without pineries. "Whenever you settle in the country, nephew, be sure you have a pinery."

"Oh, yes!" said Lumley, almost bitterly; "and a pack of hounds, and a French cook,—they will all suit my fortune very well."

"You are more thoughtful on pecuniary matters than you used to be," said the uncle.

"Sir," replied Ferrers, solemnly, "in a very short time I shall be what is called a middle-aged man."

"Humph!" said the host.

There was another silence. Lumley was a man, as we have said or implied before, of great knowledge of human nature,

—at least the ordinary sort of it,—and he now revolved in his mind the various courses it might be wise to pursue towards his rich relation. He saw that, in delicate fencing, his uncle had over him the same advantage that a tall man has over a short one with the physical sword-play: by holding his weapon in a proper position, he kept the other at arm's length. There was a grand reserve and dignity about the man who had something to give away, of which Ferrers, however actively he might shift his ground and flourish his rapier, could not break the defence. He determined, therefore, upon a new game, for which his frankness of manner admirably adapted him. Just as he formed this resolution, Mrs. Templeton rose, and with a gentle bow and soft though languid smile, glided from the room. The two gentlemen resettled themselves, and Templeton pushed the bottle to Ferrers.

"Help yourself, Lumley! Your travels seem to have deprived you of your high spirits,—you are pensive."

"Sir," said Ferrers, abruptly, "I wish to consult you."

"Oh, young man! you have been guilty of some excess, you have gambled, you have —"

"I have done nothing, sir, that should make me less worthy your esteem. I repeat, I wish to consult you; I have outlived the hot days of my youth,—I am now alive to the claims of the world. I have talents, I believe; and I have application, I know. I wish to fill a position in the world that may redeem my past indolence and do credit to my family. Sir, I set your example before me, and I now ask your counsel, with the determination to follow it."

Templeton was startled; he half shaded his face with his hand, and gazed searchingly upon the high forehead and bold eyes of his nephew. "I believe you are sincere," said he, after a pause.

"You may well believe so, sir."

"Well, I will think of this. I like an honourable ambition, not too extravagant a one,—*that* is sinful; but a *respectable* station in the world is a proper object of desire, and wealth is a blessing, because," added the rich man, taking another

slice of the pineapple, "it enables us to be of use to our fellow-creatures!"

"Sir, then," said Ferrers, with daring animation,— "then I avow that my ambition is precisely of the kind you speak of. I am obscure,— I desire to be reputably known; my fortune is mediocre,— I desire it to be great. I ask *you* for nothing,— I know your generous heart; but I wish independently to work out my own career."

"Lumley," said Templeton, "I never esteemed you so much as I do now. Listen to me,— I will confide in you: I think the Government are under obligations to me."

"I know it," exclaimed Ferrers, whose eyes sparkled at the thought of a sinecure; for sinecures *then* existed!

"And," pursued the uncle, "I intend to ask them a favour in return."

"Oh, sir!"

"Yes; I think — mark me — with management and address, I may —"

"Well, my dear sir!"

"Obtain a barony for myself and heirs; I trust I shall soon have a family!"

Had somebody given Lumley Ferrers a hearty cuff on the ear, he would have thought less of it than of this wind-up of his uncle's ambitious projects. His jaws fell, his eyes grew an inch larger, and he remained perfectly speechless.

"Ay," pursued Mr. Templeton, "I have long dreamed of this; my character is spotless, my fortune great. I have ever exerted my parliamentary influence in favour of ministers, and in this commercial country no man has higher claims than Richard Templeton to the honours of a virtuous, loyal, and religious State. Yes, my boy, I like your ambition,— you see I have some of it myself; and since you are sincere in your wish to tread in my footsteps, I think I can obtain you a junior partnership in a highly respectable establishment. Let me see; your capital now is —"

"Pardon me, sir," interrupted Lumley, colouring with indignation despite himself, "I honour commerce much, but my paternal relations are not such as would allow me to enter

into trade. And permit me to add," continued he, seizing with instant adroitness the new weakness presented to him,— "permit me to add that those relations who have been ever kind to me would, properly managed, be highly efficient in promoting your own views of advancement; for your sake I would not break with them. Lord Saxingham is still a minister,—nay, he is in the Cabinet."

"Hem — Lumley — hem!" said Templeton, thoughtfully; "we will consider, we will consider. Any more wine?"

"No, I thank you, sir."

"Then I'll just take my evening stroll and think over matters. You can rejoin Mrs. Templeton. And I say, Lumley, — I read prayers at nine o'clock. Never forget your Maker, and He will not forget you. The barony will be an excellent thing — eh? — an English peerage — yes — an English peerage! Very different from your beggarly countships abroad!"

So saying, Mr. Templeton rang for his hat and cane, and stepped into the lawn from the window of the dining-room.

"The world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open," muttered Ferrers. "I would mould this selfish old man to my purpose; for since I have neither genius to write, nor eloquence to declaim, I will at least see whether I have not cunning to plot and courage to act. Conduct, conduct, conduct, — there lies my talent; and what is conduct but a steady walk from a design to its execution?"

With these thoughts Ferrers sought Mrs. Templeton. He opened the folding-doors very gently, for all his habitual movements were quick and noiseless, and perceived that Mrs. Templeton sat by the window, and that she seemed engrossed with a book which lay open on a little work-table before her.

"Fordyce's 'Advice to Young Married Women,' I suppose. Sly jade! However, I must not have her against me."

He approached; still Mrs. Templeton did not note him, nor was it till he stood facing her that he himself observed that her tears were falling fast over the page.

He was a little embarrassed, and turning towards the window, affected to cough, and then said, without looking at Mrs. Templeton, "I fear I have disturbed you."

"No," answered the same low, stifled voice that had before replied to Lumley's vain attempts to provoke conversation; "it was a melancholy employment, and perhaps it is not right to indulge in it."

"May I inquire what author so affected you?"

"It is but a volume of poems, and I am no judge of poetry; but it contains thoughts which — which —" Mrs. Templeton paused abruptly, and Lumley quietly took up the book.

"Ah!" said he, turning to the titlepage, "my friend ought to be much flattered."

"Your friend?"

"Yes; this, I see, is by Ernest Maltravers,—a very intimate ally of mine."

"I should like to see him," cried Mrs. Templeton, almost with animation. "I read but little; it was by chance that I met with one of his books, and they are as if I heard a dear friend speaking to me. Ah, I should like to see him!"

"I'm sure, madam," said the voice of a third person, in an austere and rebuking accent, "I do not see what good it would do your immortal soul to see a man who writes idle verses, which appear to me, indeed, highly immoral. I just looked into that volume this morning, and found nothing but trash,—love-sonnets and such stuff."

Mrs. Templeton made no reply, and Lumley, in order to change the conversation, which seemed a little too matrimonial for his taste, said, rather awkwardly, "You are returned very soon, sir."

"Yes, I don't like walking in the rain!"

"Bless me, it rains, so it does! I had not observed —"

"Are you wet, sir? Had you not better —" began the wife timidly.

"No, ma'am, I'm not wet, I thank you. By the by, nephew, this new author is a friend of yours. I wonder a man of his family should condescend to turn author. He can come to no good. I hope you will drop his acquaintance,—authors are very unprofitable associates, I'm sure. I trust I shall see no more of Mr. Maltravers's books in my house."

"Nevertheless, he is well thought of, sir, and makes no

mean figure in the world," said Lumley, stoutly; for he was by no means disposed to give up a friend who might be as useful to him as Mr. Templeton himself.

"Figure or no figure, I have not had many dealings with authors in my day; and when I had I always repented it. Not sound, sir, not sound,—all cracked somewhere. Mrs. Templeton, have the kindness to get the Prayer-book. My hassock must be fresh stuffed; it gives me quite a pain in my knee. Lumley, will you ring the bell? Your aunt is very melancholy. True religion is not gloomy: we will read a sermon on Cheerfulness."

"So, so," said Mr. Ferrers to himself, as he undressed that night; "I see that my uncle is a little displeased with my aunt's pensive face,—a little jealous of her thinking of anything but himself; *tant mieux*. I must work upon this discovery; it will not do for them to live too happily with each other. And what with that lever, and what with his ambitious projects, I think I see a way to push the good things of this world a few inches nearer to Lumley Ferrers."

CHAPTER III.

THE pride, too, of her step, as light
 Along the unconscious earth she went,
 Seemed that of one born with a right
 To walk some heavenlier element. — *Loves of the Angels.*

Can it be
 That these fine impulses, these lofty thoughts
 Burning with their own beauty, are but given
 To make me the low slave of vanity? — *Erinna.*

Is she not too fair
 Even to think of maiden's sweetest care?
 The mouth and brow are contrasts — *Erinna.*

It was two or three evenings after the date of the last chapter, and there was what the newspapers call "a select party" in one of the noblest mansions in London. A young lady,

on whom all eyes were bent, and whose beauty might have served the painter for a model of Semiramis or Zenobia, more majestic than became her years, and so classically faultless as to have something cold and statue-like in its haughty lineaments, was moving through the crowd that murmured applauses as she passed. This lady was Florence Lascelles, the daughter of Lumley's great relation, the Earl of Saxingham, and supposed to be the richest heiress in England. Lord Saxingham himself drew aside his daughter as she swept along.

"Florence," said he in a whisper, "the Duke of — is greatly struck with you: be civil to him; I am about to present him."

So saying, the earl turned to a small, dark, stiff-looking man of about twenty-eight years of age, at his left, and introduced the Duke of — to Lady Florence Lascelles. The duke was unmarried: it was an introduction between the greatest *match* and the wealthiest heiress in the peerage.

"Lady Florence," said Lord Saxingham, "is as fond of horses as yourself, Duke, though not quite so good a judge."

"I confess I *do* like horses," said the duke, with an ingenuous air.

Lord Saxingham moved away.

Lady Florence stood mute; one glance of bright contempt shot from her large eyes, her lip slightly curled, and she then half turned aside, and seemed to forget that her new acquaintance was in existence.

His Grace, like most great personages, was not apt to take offence, nor could he, indeed, ever suppose that any slight towards the Duke of — could be intended; still, he thought it would be proper in Lady Florence to begin the conversation, for he himself, though not shy, was habitually silent, and accustomed to be saved the fatigue of defraying the small charges of society. After a pause, seeing, however, that Lady Florence remained speechless, he began,—

"You ride sometimes in the Park, Lady Florence?"

"Very seldom."

"It is, indeed, too warm for riding at present."

"I did not say so."

"Hem! I thought you did."

Another pause.

"Did you speak, Lady Florence?"

"No."

"Oh, I beg pardon! Lord Saxingham is looking very well."

"I am glad you think so."

"Your picture in the exhibition scarcely does you justice, Lady Florence; yet Lawrence is usually happy."

"You are very flattering," said Lady Florence, with a lively and perceptible impatience in her tone and manner. The young beauty was thoroughly spoilt, and now all the scorn of a scornful nature was drawn forth by observing the envious eyes of the crowd were bent upon one whom the Duke of — was actually talking to. Brilliant as were her own powers of conversation, she would not deign to exert them; she was an aristocrat of intellect rather than birth, and she took it into her head that the duke was an idiot. She was very much mistaken. If she had but broken up the ice, she would have found that the water below was not shallow. The duke, in fact, like many other Englishmen, though he did not like the trouble of showing forth, and had an ungainly manner, was a man who had read a good deal, possessed a sound head and an honourable mind, though he did not know what it was to love anybody, to care much for anything, and was at once perfectly sated and yet perfectly contented; for apathy is the combinaton of satiety and content.

Still, Florence judged of him as lively persons are apt to judge of the sedate,—besides, she wanted to proclaim to him and to everybody else how little she cared for dukes and great matches; she therefore, with a slight inclination of her head, turned away, and extended her hand to a dark young man, who was gazing on her with that respectful but unmistakable admiration which proud women are never proud enough to despise.

"Ah, signor," said she, in Italian, "I am so glad to see you! It is a relief indeed to find genius in a crowd of nothings."

So saying, the heiress seated herself on one of those convenient couches which hold but two, and beckoned the Italian to her side. Oh, how the vain heart of Castruccio Cesarini beat; what visions of love, rank, wealth, already flitted before him!

"I almost fancy," said Castruccio, "that the old days of romance are returned, when a queen could turn from princes and warriors to listen to a troubadour."

"Troubadours are now more rare than warriors and princes," replied Florence, with gay animation, which contrasted strongly with the coldness she had manifested to the Duke of —, "and therefore it would not now be a very great merit in a queen to fly from dulness and insipidity to poetry and wit."

"Ah! say not wit," said Cesarini; "wit is incompatible with the grave character of deep feelings,—incompatible with enthusiasm, with worship; incompatible with the thoughts that wait upon Lady Florence Lascelles."

Florence coloured and slightly frowned; but the immense distinction between her position and that of the young foreigner, with her own inexperience both of real life and the presumption of vain hearts, made her presently forget the flattery that would have offended her in another. She turned the conversation, however, into general channels, and she talked of Italian poetry with a warmth and eloquence worthy of the theme. While they thus conversed, a new guest had arrived, who from the spot where he stood, engaged with Lord Saxingham, fixed a steady and scrutinizing gaze upon the pair.

"Lady Florence has indeed improved," said this new guest. "I could not have conceived that England boasted any one half so beautiful."

"She certainly is handsome, my dear Lumley,—the Lascelles cast of countenance," replied Lord Saxingham; "and so gifted! She is positively learned; quite a *bas bleu*. I tremble to think of the crowd of poets and painters who will make a fortune out of her enthusiasm. *Entre nous*, Lumley, I could wish her married to a man of sober sense like the

Duke of —; for sober sense is exactly what she wants. Do observe, she has been sitting just half an hour flirting with that odd-looking adventurer, a Signor Cesarini, merely because he writes sonnets and wears a dress like a stage-player!"

"It is the weakness of the sex, my dear lord," said Lumley; "they like to patronize, and they dote upon all oddities, from China monsters to cracked poets. But I fancy, by a restless glance cast every now and then around the room, that my beautiful cousin has in her something of the coquette."

"There you are quite right, Lumley," returned Lord Saxingham, laughing; "but I will not quarrel with her for breaking hearts and refusing hands if she do but grow steady at last and settle into the Duchess of —."

"Duchess of —!" repeated Lumley, absently; "well, I will go and present myself. I see she is growing tired of the signor. I will sound her as to the ducal impressions, my dear lord."

"Do, — *I* dare not," replied the father; "she is an excellent girl, but heiresses are always contradictory. It was very foolish to deprive me of all control over her fortune. Come and see me again soon, Lumley. I suppose you are going abroad?"

"No, I shall settle in England; but of my prospects and plans more hereafter."

With this, Lumley quietly glided away to Florence. There was something in Ferrers that was remarkable from its very simplicity. His clear, sharp features, with the short hair and high brow, the absolute plainness of his dress, and the noiseless, easy, self-collected calm of all his motions, made a strong contrast to the showy Italian by whose side he now stood. Florence looked up at him with some little surprise at his intrusion.

"Ah, you don't recollect me!" said Lumley, with his pleasant laugh. "Faithless Imogen, after all your vows of constancy! Behold your Alonzo!"

"The worms they crept in, and the worms they crept out."

Don't you remember how you trembled when I told you that true story as we —

“‘Conversed as we sat on the green?’”

“Oh!” cried Florence, “it is indeed you, my dear cousin, my dear Lumley! What an age since we parted!”

“Don't talk of age,—it is an ugly word to a man of my years. Pardon, signor, if I disturb you.”

And here Lumley, with a low bow, slid coolly into the place which Cesarini, who had shyly risen, left vacant for him. Castruccio looked disconcerted; but Florence had forgotten him in her delight at seeing Lumley, and Cesarini moved discontentedly away and seated himself at a distance.

“And I come back,” continued Lumley, “to find you a confirmed beauty and a professional coquette. Don't blush!”

“Do they indeed call me a coquette?”

“Oh, yes! for once, the world is just.”

“Perhaps I do deserve the reproach. Oh, Lumley, how I despise all that I see and hear!”

“What, even the Duke of ——?”

“Yes, I fear even the Duke of —— is no exception!”

“Your father will go mad if he hear you.”

“My father, my poor father! Yes, he thinks the utmost that I, Florence Lascelles, am made for, is to wear a ducal coronet and give the best balls in London.”

“And pray what was Florence Lascelles made for?”

“Ah! I cannot answer the question. I fear for Discontent and Disdain.”

“You are an enigma; but I will take pains, and not rest till I solve you.”

“I defy you.”

“Thanks! Better defy than despise.”

“Oh! you must be strangely altered if I can despise *you*.”

“Indeed! what do you remember of me?”

“That you were frank, bold, and therefore, I suppose, true; that you shocked my aunts and my father by your contempt for the vulgar hypocrisies of our conventional life. Oh, no! I cannot despise you.”

Lumley raised his eyes to those of Florence; he gazed on her long and earnestly: ambitious hopes rose high within him.

"My fair cousin," said he, in an altered and serious tone, "I see something in your spirit kindred to mine; and I am glad that yours is one of the earliest voices which confirm my new resolves on my return to busy England!"

"And those resolves?"

"Are an Englishman's,—energetic and ambitious."

"Alas, ambition! How many false portraits are there of the great original!"

Lumley thought he had found a clew to the heart of his cousin, and he began to expatiate, with unusual eloquence, on the nobleness of that daring sin which "lost angels heaven." Florence listened to him with attention, but not with sympathy. Lumley was deceived. His was not an ambition that could attract the fastidious but high-souled Idealist. The selfishness of his nature broke out in all the sentiments that he fancied would seem to her most elevated. Place, power, titles,—all these objects were low and vulgar to one who saw them daily at her feet.

At a distance the Duke of — continued from time to time to direct his cold gaze at Florence. He did not like her the less for not seeming to court him. He had something generous within him, and could understand her. He went away at last, and thought seriously of Florence as a wife. Not a wife for companionship, for friendship, for love, but a wife who could take the trouble of rank off his hands, do him honour, and raise him an heir whom he might flatter himself would be his own.

From his corner also, with dreams yet more vain and daring, Castruccio Cesarini cast his eyes upon the queen-like brow of the great heiress. Oh, yes! she had a soul,—she could disdain rank and revere genius! What a triumph over De Montaigne, Maltravers, all the world, if he, the neglected poet, could win the hand for which the magnates of the earth sighed in vain! Pure and lofty as he thought himself, it was her birth and her wealth which Cesarini adored in Florence.

And Lumley, nearer perhaps to the prize than either, yet still far off, went on conversing, with eloquent lips and sparkling eyes, while his cold heart was planning every word, dictating every glance, and laying out (for the most worldly are often the most visionary) the chart for a royal road to fortune. And Florence Lascelles, when the crowd had dispersed and she sought her chamber, forgot all three, and with that morbid romance often peculiar to those for whom Fate smiles the most, mused over the ideal image of the one she *could* love,—in maiden meditation, *not* fancy-free!

CHAPTER IV.

IN mea vesanas habui dispendia vires,
Et valui pœnas fortis in ipse meas.¹ — OVID.

Then might my breast be read within,
A thousand volumes would be written there.

EARL OF STIRLING.

ERNEST MALTRAVERS was at the height of his reputation; the work which he had deemed the crisis that was to make or mar him was the most brilliantly successful of all he had yet committed to the public. Certainly, chance did as much for it as merit, as is usually the case with works that become instantaneously popular. We may hammer away at the casket with strong arm and good purpose, and all in vain; when some morning a careless stroke hits the right nail on the head, and we secure the treasure.

It was at this time, when in the prime of youth, rich, courted, respected, run after, that Ernest Maltravers fell seriously ill. It was no active or visible disease, but a general irritability of the nerves, and a languid sinking of the whole frame. His labours began, perhaps, to tell against him. In

¹ "I had the strength of a madman to my own cost, and employed *that* strength in my own punishment."

earlier life he had been as active as a hunter of the chamois, and the hardy exercise of his frame counteracted the effects of a restless and ardent mind. The change from an athletic to a sedentary habit of life, the wear and tear of the brain, the absorbing passion for knowledge which day and night kept all his faculties in a stretch, made strange havoc in a constitution naturally strong. The poor author, how few persons understand, and forbear with, and pity him! He sells his health and youth to a rugged taskmaster. And, O blind and selfish world! you expect him to be as free of manner, and as pleasant of cheer, and as equal of mood as if he were passing the most agreeable and healthful existence that pleasure could afford to smooth the wrinkles of the mind, or medicine invent to regulate the nerves of the body. But there was, besides all this, another cause that operated against the successful man,—his heart was too solitary; he lived without the sweet household ties. The connections and amities he formed, excited for a moment, but possessed no charm to comfort or to soothe. Cleveland resided so much in the country, and was of so much calmer a temperament, and so much more advanced in age, that, with all the friendship that subsisted between them, there was none of that daily and familiar interchange of confidence which affectionate natures demand as the very food of life. Of his brother (as the reader will conjecture from never having been formally presented to him) Ernest saw but little. Colonel Maltravers, one of the gayest and handsomest men of his time, married to a fine lady, lived principally at Paris, except when, for a few weeks in the shooting season, he filled his country house with companions who had nothing in common with Ernest. The brothers corresponded regularly every quarter, and saw each other once a year,—this was all their intercourse. Ernest Maltravers stood in the world alone with that cold but anxious spectre, — Reputation.

It was late at night. Before a table covered with the monuments of erudition and thought sat a young man with a pale and worn countenance. The clock in the room told with a fretting distinctness every moment that lessened the journey

to the grave. There was an anxious and expectant expression on the face of the student, and from time to time he glanced to the clock and muttered to himself. Was it a letter from some adored mistress, the soothing flattery from some mighty arbiter of arts and letters, that the young man eagerly awaited? No; the aspirer was forgotten in the valetudinarian. Ernest Maltravers was waiting the visit of his physician, whom at that late hour a sudden thought had induced him to summon from his rest. At length the well-known knock was heard, and in a few moments the physician entered. He was one well versed in the peculiar pathology of bookmen, and kindly as well as skilful.

"My dear Mr. Maltravers, what is this? How are we? Not seriously ill, I hope,—no relapse. Pulse low and irregular, I see, but no fever. You are nervous."

"Doctor," said the student, "I did not send for you at this time of night from the idle fear or fretful caprice of an invalid. But when I saw you this morning, you dropped some hints which have haunted me ever since. Much that it befits the conscience and the soul to attend to without loss of time depends upon my full knowledge of my real state. If I understand you rightly, I may have but a short time to live,—is it so?"

"Indeed!" said the doctor, turning away his face, "you have exaggerated my meaning. I did not say that you were in what we technically call danger."

"Am I then likely to be a *long-lived* man?"

The doctor coughed. "That is uncertain, my dear young friend," said he, after a pause.

"Be plain with me. The plans of life must be based upon such calculations as we can reasonably form of its probable duration. Do not fancy that I am weak enough or coward enough to shrink from any abyss which I have approached unconsciously; I desire, I adjure,—nay, I command,—you to be explicit."

There was an earnest and solemn dignity in his patient's voice and manner which deeply touched and impressed the good physician.

"I will answer you frankly," said he: "you overwork the nerves and the brain; if you do not relax, you will subject yourself to confirmed disease and premature death. For several months, perhaps for years to come, you should wholly cease from literary labour. Is this a hard sentence? You are rich and young,—enjoy yourself while you can."

Maltravers appeared satisfied, changed the conversation, talked easily on other matters for a few minutes; nor was it till he had dismissed his physician that he broke forth with the thoughts that were burning in him.

"Oh!" cried he aloud, as he rose and paced the room with rapid strides, "now, when I see before me the broad and luminous path, am I to be condemned to halt and turn aside? A vast empire rises on my view, greater than that of Cæsars and conquerors,—an empire durable and universal in the souls of men, that time itself cannot overthrow; and Death marches with me, side by side, and the skeleton hand waves me back to the nothingness of common men."

He paused at the casement, he threw it open, and leaned forth and gasped for air. Heaven was serene and still, as morning came coldly forth amongst the waning stars; and the haunts of men, in their thoroughfare of idleness and of pleasure, were desolate and void. Nothing, save Nature, was awake.

"And if, O stars!" murmured Maltravers, from the depth of his excited heart, "if I have been insensible to your solemn beauty; if the Heaven and the Earth had been to me but as air and clay; if I were one of a dull and dim-eyed herd,—I might live on, and drop into the grave from the ripeness of unprofitable years. It is because I yearn for the great objects of an immortal being that life shrinks and shrivels up like a scroll. Away! I will not listen to these human and material monitors, and consider life as a thing greater than the things that I would live for. My choice is made; glory is more persuasive than the grave."

He turned impatiently from the casement; his eyes flashed, his chest heaved, he trod the chamber with a monarch's air. All the calculations of prudence, all the tame and methodical

reasonings with which, from time to time, he had sought to sober down the impetuous man into the calm machine, faded away before the burst of awful and commanding passions that swept over his soul. Tell a man, in the full tide of his triumphs, that he bears death within him, and what crisis of thought can be more startling and more terrible!

Maltravers had, as we have seen, cared little for fame till fame had been brought within his reach; then, with every step he took, new Alps had arisen. Each new conjecture brought to light a new truth that demanded enforcement or defence. Rivalry and competition chafed his blood and kept his faculties at their full speed. He had the generous race-horse spirit of emulation. Ever in action, ever in progress, cheered on by the sarcasms of foes even more than by the applause of friends, the desire of glory had become the habit of existence. When we have commenced a career, what stop is there till the grave? Where is the definite barrier of that ambition which, like the eastern bird, seems ever on the wing, and never rests upon the earth? Our names are not settled till our death; the ghosts of what we have done are made our haunting monitors, our scourging avengers, if ever we cease to do, or fall short of the younger past. Repose is oblivion; to pause is to unravel all the web that we have woven,—until the tomb closes over us, and men, just when it is too late, strike the fair balance between ourselves and our rivals, and we are measured, not by the least but by the greatest triumphs we have achieved. Oh, what a crushing sense of impotence comes over us when we feel that our frame cannot support our mind; when the hand can no longer execute what the soul, actively as ever, conceives and desires! The quick life tied to the dead form; the ideas fresh as immortality, gushing forth rich and golden,—and the broken nerves, and the aching frame, and the weary eyes! The spirit athirst for liberty and heaven,—and the damning, choking consciousness that we are walled up and prisoned in a dungeon that must be our burial-place! Talk not of freedom,—there is no such thing as freedom to a man whose body is the jail, whose infirmities are the racks, of his genius!

Maltravers paused at last, and threw himself on his sofa, wearied and exhausted. Involuntarily, and as a half unconscious means of escaping from his conflicting and profitless emotions, he turned to several letters which had for hours lain unopened on his table. Every one, the seal of which he broke, seemed to mock his state; every one seemed to attest the felicity of his fortunes. Some bespoke the admiring sympathy of the highest and wisest; one offered him a brilliant opening into public life; another (it was from Cleveland) was fraught with all the proud and rapturous approbation of a prophet whose auguries are at last fulfilled. At that letter Maltravers sighed deeply, and paused before he turned to the others. The last he opened was in an unknown hand, nor was any name affixed to it. Like all writers of some note, Maltravers was in the habit of receiving anonymous letters of praise, censure, warning, and exhortation, — especially from young ladies at boarding-schools, and old ladies in the country; but there was that in the first sentences of the letter, which he now opened with a careless hand, that riveted his attention. It was a small and beautiful handwriting; yet the letters were more clear and bold than they usually are in feminine calligraphy.

“Ernest Maltravers,” began this singular effusion, “have you weighed yourself? Are you aware of your capacities? Do you feel that for you there may be a more dazzling reputation than that which appears to content you? You who seem to penetrate into the subtlest windings of the human heart, and to have examined nature as through a glass; you, whose thoughts stand forth like armies marshalled in defence of truth, bold and dauntless, and without a stain upon their glittering armour, — are you, at your age and with your advantages, to bury yourself amidst books and scrolls? Do you forget that action is the grand career for men who think as you do? Will this word-weighting and picture-writing, the cold eulogies of pedants, the listless praises of literary idlers, content all the yearnings of your ambition? You were not made solely for the closet; ‘The Dreams of Pindus and the Aonian Maids’ cannot endure through the noon of manhood. You are too practical for the mere poet, and too poetical to sink into the dull tenor of a learned life. I have never seen you, yet I know you, — I read your spirit in your page; that aspiration for something better and greater than the

great and the good, which colours all your passionate revelations of yourself and others, cannot be satisfied merely by ideal images. You cannot be contented, as poets and historians mostly are, by becoming great only from delineating great men, or imagining great events, or describing a great era. Is it not worthier of you to *be* what you fancy or relate? Awake, Maltravers, awake! Look into your heart, and feel your proper destinies. And who am I that thus address you? A woman whose soul is filled with you, — a woman in whom your eloquence has awakened, amidst frivolous and vain circles, the sense of a new existence; a woman who would make you, yourself, the embodied ideal of your own thoughts and dreams, and who would ask from earth no other lot than that of following you on the road of fame with the eyes of her heart. Mistake me not: I repeat that I have never seen you, nor do I wish it; you might be other than I imagine, and I should lose an idol and be left without a worship. I am a kind of visionary Rosicrucian: it is a spirit that I adore, and not a being like myself. You imagine, perhaps, that I have some purpose to serve in this: I have no object in administering to your vanity; and if I judge you rightly, this letter is one that might make you vain without a blush. Oh, the admiration that does not spring from holy and profound sources of emotion, how it saddens us or disgusts! I have had my share of vulgar homage, and it only makes me feel doubly alone. I am richer than you are; I have youth, — I have what they call beauty. And neither riches, youth, nor beauty ever gave me the silent and deep happiness I experience when I think of you. This is a worship that might, I repeat, well make even you vain. Think of these words, I implore you. Be worthy, not of my thoughts, but of the shape in which they represent you; and every ray of glory that surrounds you will brighten my own way, and inspire me with a kindred emulation. Farewell. I may write to you again, but you will never discover me; and in life I pray that we may never meet!"

CHAPTER V.

OUR list of nobles next let Amri grace.

Absalom and Achitophel.

Sine me vacivum tempus ne quod dem mihi

Laboris.¹ — TERENCE.

"I CAN'T think," said one of a group of young men loitering by the steps of a club-house in St. James's Street,—"I can't think what has chanced to Maltravers. Do you observe (as he walks — there — the other side of the way) how much he is altered? He stoops like an old man, and hardly ever lifts his eyes from the ground. He certainly seems sick and sad."

"Writing books, I suppose."

"Or privately married."

"Or growing too rich, — rich men are always unhappy beings."

"Ha, Ferrers, how are you?"

"So-so. What's the news?" replied Lumley.

"Rattler pays forfeit."

"Oh! but in politics?"

"Hang politics! Are you turned politician?"

"At my age, what else is there left to do?"

"I thought so, by your hat; all politicians sport odd-looking hats. It is very remarkable, but that is the great symptom of the disease."

"My hat,—*is* it odd?" said Ferrers, taking off the commodity in question, and seriously regarding it.

"Why, who ever saw such a brim?"

"Glad you think so."

"Why, Ferrers?"

"Because it is a prudent policy in this country to surrender something trifling up to ridicule. If people can abuse your

¹ "Suffer me to employ my spare time in some kind of labour."

hat or your carriage, or the shape of your nose, or a wart on your chin, they let slip a thousand more important matters. 'T is the wisdom of the camel-driver, who gives up his gown for the camel to trample on, that he may escape himself."

"How droll you are, Ferrers! Well, I shall turn in, and read the papers; and you —"

"Shall pay my visits and rejoice in my hat."

"Good-day to you. By the by, your friend Maltravers has just passed, looking thoughtful, and talking to himself. What's the matter with him?"

"Lamenting, perhaps, that he, too, does not wear an odd hat for gentlemen like you to laugh at, and leave the rest of him in peace. Good-day."

On went Ferrers, and soon found himself in the Mall of the Park. Here he was joined by Mr. Templeton.

"Well, Lumley," said the latter (and it may be here remarked that Mr. Templeton now exhibited towards his nephew a greater respect of manner and tone than he had thought it necessary to observe before), — "well, Lumley, and have you seen Lord Saxingham?"

"I have, sir; and I regret to say —"

"I thought so, I thought it," interrupted Templeton. "No gratitude in public men, no wish, in high place, to honour virtue!"

"Pardon me. Lord Saxingham declares that he should be delighted to forward your views, that no man more deserves a peerage; but that —"

"Oh, yes; always 'buts'!"

"But that there are so many claimants at present whom it is impossible to satisfy; and — and — But I feel I ought not to go on."

"Proceed, sir, I beg."

"Why, then, Lord Saxingham is (I must be frank) a man who has a great regard for his own family. Your marriage — a source, my dear uncle, of the greatest gratification to me — cuts off the probable chance of your fortune and title, if you acquire the latter, descending to —"

"Yourself!" put in Templeton, dryly. "Your relation

seems, for the first time, to have discovered how dear your interests are to him."

"For me, individually, sir, my relation does not care a rush; but he cares a great deal for any member of his house being rich and in high station. It increases the range and credit of his connections; and Lord Saxingham is a man whom connections help to keep great. To be plain with you, he will not stir in this business because he does not see how his kinsman is to be benefited or his house strengthened."

"Public virtue!" exclaimed Templeton.

"Virtue, my dear uncle, is a female: as long as she is private property, she is excellent; but public virtue, like any other public lady, is a common prostitute."

"Pshaw!" grunted Templeton, who was too much out of humour to read his nephew the lecture he might otherwise have done upon the impropriety of his simile; for Mr. Templeton was one of those men who hold it vicious to talk of vice as existing in the world: he was very much shocked to hear anything called by its proper name.

"Has not Mrs. Templeton some connections that may be useful to you?"

"No, sir!" cried the uncle, in a voice of thunder.

"Sorry to hear it. But we cannot expect all things: you have married for love, you have a happy home, a charming wife,—this is better than a title and a fine lady."

"Mr. Lumley Ferrers, you may spare me your consolations. My wife—"

"Loves you dearly, I dare say," said the imperturbable nephew. "She has so much sentiment, is so fond of poetry. Oh, yes! she must love one who has done so much for her."

"Done so much: what do you mean?"

"Why, with your fortune, your station, your just ambition,—you, who might have married any one; nay, by remaining unmarried, have conciliated all my interested, selfish relations, hang them,—you have married a lady without connections, and what more could you do for her?"

"Pooh, pooh! you don't know all."

Here Templeton stopped short, as if about to say too much,

and frowned; then, after a pause, he resumed, "Lumley, I have married, it is true. You may not be my heir, but I will make it up to you,—that is, if you deserve my affection."

"My dear uncle—"

"Don't interrupt me: I have projects for you. Let our interests be the same. The title may yet descend to you; I may have no male offspring. Meanwhile, draw on me to any reasonable amount,—young men have expenses; but be prudent, and if you want to get on in the world, never let the world detect you in a scrape. There, leave me now."

"My best, my heartfelt thanks!"

"Hush! Sound Lord Saxingham again; I must and will have this bauble,—I have set my heart on it." So saying, Templeton waved away his nephew and musingly pursued his path towards Hyde Park Corner, where his carriage awaited him. As soon as he entered his demesnes, he saw his wife's daughter running across the lawn to greet him. His heart softened; he checked the carriage and descended; he caressed her, he played with her, he laughed as she laughed. No parent could be more fond.

"Lumley Ferrers has talent to do me honour," said he, anxiously; "but his principles seem unstable. However, surely that open manner is the sign of a good heart."

Meanwhile, Ferrers, in high spirits, took his way to Ernest's house. His friend was not at home; but Ferrers never wanted a host's presence in order to be at home himself. Books were round him in abundance; but Ferrers was not one of those who read for amusement. He threw himself into an easy-chair, and began weaving new meshes of ambition and intrigue. At length the door opened, and Maltravers entered.

"Why, Ernest, how ill you are looking!"

"I have not been well, but I am now recovering. As physicians recommend change of air to ordinary patients, so I am about to try change of habit. Active I must be,—action is the condition of my being; but I must have done with books for the present. You see me in a new character."

"How?"

"That of a public man,—I have entered parliament."

"You astonish me! I have read the papers this morning; I saw not even a vacancy, much less an election."

"It is all managed by the lawyer and the banker. In other words, my seat is a close borough."

"No bore of constituents! I congratulate you, and envy. I wish I were in parliament myself."

"You! I never fancied you bitten by the political mania."

"Political? No. But it is the most respectable way, with luck, of living on the public; better than swindling."

"A candid way of viewing the question. But I thought at one time you were half a Benthamite, and that your motto was, 'The greatest happiness of the greatest number.'"

"The greatest number to me is number *one*. I agree with the Pythagoreans,—unity is the perfect principle of creation! Seriously, how can you mistake the principles of opinion for the principles of conduct? I am a Benthamite, a benevolist, as a logician; but the moment I leave the closet for the world, I lay aside speculation for others, and act for myself."

"You are at least more frank than prudent in these confessions."

"There you are wrong. It is by affecting to be worse than we are that we become popular, and we get credit for being both honest and practical fellows. My uncle's mistake is to be a hypocrite in words: it rarely answers. Be frank in words, and nobody will suspect hypocrisy in your designs."

Maltravers gazed hard at Ferrers. Something revolted and displeased his high-wrought Platonism in the easy wisdom of his old friend; but he felt, almost for the first time, that Ferrers was a man to get on in the world, and he sighed,—I hope it was for the world's sake.

After a short conversation on indifferent matters, Cleveland was announced; and Ferrers, who could make nothing out of Cleveland, soon withdrew. Ferrers was now becoming an economist in his time.

"My dear Maltravers," said Cleveland, when they were alone, "I am so glad to see you; for, in the first place, I rejoice to find you are extending your career of usefulness."

"Usefulness,—ah, let me think so! Life is so uncertain

and so short that we cannot too soon bring the little it can yield into the great commonwealth of the Beautiful or the Honest; and both belong to and make up the Useful. But in politics, and in a highly artificial state, what doubts beset us, what darkness surrounds! If we connive at abuses, we juggle with our own reason and integrity; if we attack them, how much, how fatally, we may derange that solemn and conventional ORDER which is the mainspring of the vast machine! How little, too, can one man, whose talents may not be in that coarse road, in that mephitic atmosphere, be enabled to effect!"

"He may effect a vast deal, even without eloquence or labour; he may effect a vast deal if he can set one example, amidst a crowd of selfish aspirants and heated fanatics, of an honest and dispassionate man. He may effect more if he may serve among the representatives of that hitherto unrepresented thing, Literature; if he redeem, by an ambition above place and emolument, the character for subservience that court-poets have obtained for letters; if he may prove that speculative knowledge is not disjoined from the practical world, and maintain the dignity of disinterestedness that should belong to learning. But the end of a scientific morality is not to serve others only, but also to perfect and accomplish our individual selves: our own souls are a solemn trust to our own lives. You are about to add to your experience of human motives and active men; and whatever additional wisdom you acquire will become equally evident and equally useful, no matter whether it be communicated through action or in books. Enough of this, my dear Ernest. I have come to dine with you, and make you accompany me to-night to a house where you will be welcome, and I think interested. Nay, no excuses. I have promised Lord Latimer that he shall make your acquaintance, and he is one of the most eminent men with whom political life will connect you."

And to this change of habits, from the closet to the senate, had Maltravers been induced by a state of health, which, with most men, would have been an excuse for indolence. Indolent he could not be; he had truly said to Ferrers that action

was the condition of his being. If THOUGHT, with its fever and aching tension, had been too severe a taskmaster on the nerves and brain, the coarse and homely pursuit of practical politics would leave the imagination and intellect in repose, while it would excite the hardier qualities and gifts which animate without exhausting. So, at least, hoped Maltravers. He remembered the profound saying in one of his favourite German authors, "that to keep the mind and body in perfect health, it is necessary to mix habitually and betimes in the common affairs of men." And the anonymous correspondent,—had her exhortations any influence on his decision? I know not. But when Cleveland left him, Maltravers unlocked his desk and re-perused the last letter he had received from the Unknown. The *last* letter! Yes, those epistles had now become frequent.

CHAPTER VI.

LE brillant de votre esprit donne un si grand éclat à votre teint et à vos yeux que quoiqu'il semble que l'esprit ne doit toucher que les oreilles, il est pourtant certain que la vôtre ébluit les yeux.¹ — *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné.*

AT Lord Latimer's house were assembled some hundreds of those persons who are rarely found together in London society; for business, politics, and literature draught off the most eminent men, and usually leave to houses that receive the world little better than indolent rank or ostentatious wealth. Even the young men of pleasure turn up their noses at parties nowadays, and find society a bore. But there are some dozen or two of houses, the owners of which are both apart from and above the fashion, in which a foreigner may

¹ "The brilliancy of your wit gives so great a lustre to your complexion and your eyes, that, though it seems that wit should only reach the ears, it is altogether certain that yours dazzles the eyes."

see, collected under the same roof, many of the most remarkable men of busy, thoughtful, majestic England. Lord Latimer himself had been a Cabinet minister. He retired from public life on pretence of ill-health, but in reality because its anxious bustle was not congenial to a gentle and accomplished, but somewhat feeble, mind. With a high reputation and an excellent cook, he enjoyed a great popularity both with his own party and the world in general; and he was the centre of a small, but distinguished circle of acquaintances, who drank Latimer's wine, and quoted Latimer's sayings, and liked Latimer much better because, not being author or minister, he was not in their way.

Lord Latimer received Maltravers with marked courtesy, and even deference, and invited him to join his own whist-table,— which was one of the highest compliments his lordship could pay to his intellect. But when his guest refused the proffered honour, the earl turned him over to the countess, as having become the property of the womankind; and was soon immersed in his aspirations for the odd trick.

Whilst Maltravers was conversing with Lady Latimer, he happened to raise his eyes, and saw opposite to him a young lady of such remarkable beauty that he could scarcely refrain from an admiring exclamation. "And who," he asked, recovering himself, "is that lady? It is strange that even I, who go so little into the world, should be compelled to inquire the name of one whose beauty must already have made her celebrated."

"Oh, Lady Florence Lascelles,— she came out last year. She is indeed most brilliant, yet more so in mind and accomplishments than face. I must be allowed to introduce you."

At this offer a strange shyness, and as it were reluctant distrust, seized Maltravers,— a kind of presentiment of danger and evil. He drew back, and would have made some excuse, but Lady Latimer did not heed his embarrassment, and was already by the side of Lady Florence Lascelles. A moment more, and beckoning to Maltravers, the countess presented him to the lady. As he bowed and seated himself beside his new acquaintance, he could not but observe that her cheeks

were suffused with the most lively blushes, and that she received him with a confusion not common even in ladies just brought out and just introduced to "a lion." He was rather puzzled than flattered by these tokens of an embarrassment somewhat akin to his own, and the first few sentences of their conversation passed off with a certain awkwardness and reserve. At this moment, to the surprise, perhaps to the relief, of Ernest, they were joined by Lumley Ferrers.

"Ah, Lady Florence, I kiss your hands! I am charmed to find you acquainted with my friend Maltravers."

"And Mr. Ferrers, what makes him so late to-night?" asked the fair Florence, with a sudden ease which rather startled Maltravers.

"A dull dinner,—*voilà tout!* I have no other excuse." And Ferrers, sliding into a vacant chair on the other side of Lady Florence, conversed volubly and unceasingly, as if seeking to monopolize her attention.

Ernest had not been so much captivated with the manner of Florence as he had been struck with her beauty; and now, seeing her apparently engaged with another, he rose, and quietly moved away. He was soon one of a knot of men who were conversing on the absorbing topics of the day; and as by degrees the exciting subject brought out his natural eloquence and masculine sense, the talkers became listeners, the knot widened into a circle, and he himself was unconsciously the object of general attention and respect.

"And what think you of Mr. Maltravers?" asked Ferrers, carelessly. "Does he keep up your expectations?"

Lady Florence had sunk into a reverie, and Ferrers repeated his question.

"He is younger than I imagined him, and — and —"

"Handsome, I suppose, you mean."

"No! calmer, and less animated."

"He seems animated enough now," said Ferrers; "but your ladylike conversation failed in striking the Promethean spark. 'Lay that flattering unction to your soul.'"

"Ah! you are right; he must have thought me very —"

"Beautiful, no doubt."

"Beautiful! I hate the word, Lumley. I wish I were not handsome; I might then get some credit for my intellect."

"Humph!" said Ferrers, significantly.

"Oh, you don't think so, sceptic?" said Florence, shaking her head with a slight laugh and an altered manner.

"Does it matter what I think," said Ferrers, with an attempted touch at the sentimental, "when Lord This, and Lord That, and Mr. So-and-so, and Count What-d' ye-call-him, are all making their way to you to dispossess me of my envied monopoly?"

While Ferrers spoke, several of the scattered loungers grouped around Florence, and the conversation, of which she was the cynosure, became animated and gay. Oh, how brilliant she was, that peerless Florence! With what petulant and sparkling grace came wit and wisdom, and even genius, from those ruby lips! Even the assured Ferrers felt his subtle intellect as dull and coarse to hers, and shrank with a reluctant apprehension from the arrows of her careless and prodigal repartees. For there was a scorn in the nature of Florence Lascelles which made her wit pain more frequently than it pleased. Educated even to learning, courageous even to a want of feminacy, she delighted to sport with ignorance and pretension, even in the highest places; and the laugh that she excited was like lightning,—no one could divine where next it might fall.

But Florence, though dreaded and unloved, was yet courted, flattered, and the rage. For this there were two reasons: first, she was a coquette; and secondly, she was an heiress.

Thus the talkers in the room were divided into two principal groups, over one of which Maltravers may be said to have presided; over the other, Florence. As the former broke up, Ernest was joined by Cleveland.

"My dear cousin," said Florence, suddenly, and in a whisper, as she turned to Lumley, "your friend is speaking of me, —I see it. Go, I implore you, and let me know what he says!"

"The commission is not flattering," said Ferrers, almost sullenly.

"Nay, a commission to gratify a woman's curiosity is ever one of the most flattering embassies with which we can invest an able negotiator."

"Well, I must do your bidding, though I disown the favour." Ferrers moved away, and joined Cleveland and Maltravers.

"She is indeed beautiful; so perfect a contour I never beheld: she is the only woman I ever saw in whom the aquiline features seem more classical than even the Greek."

"So that is your opinion of my fair cousin!" cried Ferrers; "you are caught."

"I wish he were," said Cleveland. "Ernest is now old enough to settle, and there is not a more dazzling prize in England,—rich, high-born, lovely, and accomplished."

"And what say you?" asked Lumley, almost impatiently, to Maltravers.

"That I never saw one whom I admire more or could love less," replied Ernest, as he quitted the rooms.

Ferrers looked after him, and muttered to himself; he then rejoined Florence, who presently rose to depart, and taking Lumley's arm, said, "Well, I see my father is looking round for me; and so for once I will forestall him. Come, Lumley, let us join him; I know he wants to see you."

"Well?" said Florence, blushing deeply and almost breathless, as they crossed the now half-empty apartments.

"Well, my cousin?"

"You provoke me! Well, then, what said your friend?"

"That you deserved your reputation of beauty, but that you were not his style. Maltravers is in love, you know."

"In love!"

"Yes,—a pretty Frenchwoman! Quite romantic,—an attachment of some years' standing."

Florence turned away her face, and said no more.

"That's a good fellow, Lumley," said Lord Saxingham; "Florence is never more welcome to my eyes than at half-past one o'clock A. M., when I associate her with thoughts of my natural rest and my unfortunate carriage-horses. By the by, I wish you would dine with me next Saturday."

"Saturday,—unfortunately I am engaged to my uncle."

"Oh! he has behaved handsomely to you?"

"Yes."

"Mrs. Templeton pretty well?"

"I fancy so."

"As ladies wish to be, etc.?" whispered his lordship.

"No, thank Heaven!"

"Well, if the old man could but make you his heir, we might think twice about the title."

"My dear lord, stop,—one favour: write me a line to hint that delicately."

"No, no letters; letters always get into the papers."

"But cautiously worded,—no danger of publication, on my honour."

"I'll think of it. Good-night."

BOOK VII.

Χρὴ ὡς ἄριστον μὲν αὐτὸν πειρᾶσθαι, γινέσθαι, μὴ μόνον δὲ αὐτὸν νομίζειν ἄριστον δύνασθαι γενέσθαι, etc. — PLOTINUS: *En.* 11, lib. ix. c. 9.

"Every man should strive to be as good as possible, but not suppose himself to be the only thing that is good."

CHAPTER I.

DECEIT is the strong but subtle chain which runs through all the members of a society and links them together; trick or be tricked is the alternative; 'tis the way of the world, and without it intercourse would drop. — ANONYMOUS WRITER OF 1722.

A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
And motions which o'er things indifferent shed
The grace and gentleness from whence they came.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

His years but young, but his experience old. — SHAKESPEARE.

He after honour hunts, I after love. — SHAKESPEARE.

LUMLEY FERRERS was one of the few men in the world who act upon a profound, deliberate, and organized system; he had done so even from a boy. When he was twenty-one, he had said to himself, "Youth is the season for enjoyment: the triumphs of manhood, the wealth of age, do not compensate for a youth spent in unpleasurable toils." Agreeably to this maxim, he had resolved not to adopt any profession; and being fond of travel, and of a restless temper, he had indulged abroad in all the gratifications that his moderate income could afford him. That income went further on the Continent than at home, which was another reason for the prolongation of his

travels. Now, when the whims and passions of youth were sated, and ripened by a consummate and various knowledge of mankind, his harder capacities of mind became developed, and centred into such ambition as it was his nature to conceive, he acted no less upon a regular and methodical plan of conduct, which he carried into details. He had little or nothing within himself to cross his cold theories by contradictory practice; for he was curbed by no principles, and regulated but by few tastes,—and our tastes are often checks as powerful as our principles. Looking round the English world, Ferrers saw that at his age and with an equivocal position, and no chances to throw away, it was necessary that he should cast off all attributes of the character of the wanderer and the *garçon*.

“There is nothing respectable in lodgings and a cab,” said Ferrers to himself,—that “self” was his grand confidant!—“nothing stationary. Such are the appliances of a here-to-day-gone-to-morrow kind of life. One never looks substantial till one pays rates and taxes and has a bill with one’s butcher!”

Accordingly, without saying a word to anybody, Ferrers took a long lease of a large house in one of those quiet streets that proclaim the owners do not wish to be made by fashionable situations,—streets in which, if you have a large house, it is supposed to be because you can afford one. He was very particular in its being a respectable street: Great George Street, Westminster, was the one he selected.

No frippery or baubles common to the mansions of young bachelors, no buhl and marquetry and Sèvres china and cabinet pictures, distinguished the large, dingy drawing-rooms of Lumley Ferrers. He bought all the old furniture a bargain of the late tenant,—tea-coloured chintz curtains, and chairs and sofas that were venerable and solemn with the accumulated dust of twenty-five years. The only things about which he was particular were a very long dining-table that would hold four-and-twenty, and a new mahogany sideboard. Somebody asked him why he cared about such articles. “I don’t know,” said he; “but I observe all respectable family men do.

There must be something in it; I shall discover the secret by and by."

In this house did Mr. Ferrers ensconce himself, with two middle-aged maidservants and a man out of livery, whom he chose from a multitude of candidates because the man looked especially well fed.

Having thus settled himself, and told every one that the lease of his house was for sixty-three years, Lumley Ferrers made a little calculation of his probable expenditure, which he found, with good management, might amount to about one fourth more than his income.

"I shall take the surplus out of my capital," said he, "and try the experiment for five years; if it don't do, and pay me profitably, why then either men are not to be lived upon, or Lumley Ferrers is a much duller dog than he thinks himself!"

Mr. Ferrers had deeply studied the character of his uncle, as a prudent speculator studies the qualities of a mine in which he means to invest his capital, and much of his present proceedings was intended to act upon the uncle as well as upon the world. He saw that the more he could obtain for himself, not a noisy, social, fashionable reputation, but a good, sober, substantial one, the more highly Mr. Templeton would consider him, and the more likely he was to be made his uncle's heir,—that is, provided Mrs. Templeton did not supersede the nepotal parasite by indigenous olive-branches. This last apprehension died away as time passed and no signs of fertility appeared. And, accordingly, Ferrers thought he might prudently hazard more upon the game on which he now ventured to rely. There was one thing, however, that greatly disturbed his peace: Mr. Templeton, though harsh and austere in his manner to his wife, was evidently attached to her; and above all, he cherished the fondest affection for his step-daughter. He was as anxious for her health, her education, her little childish enjoyments as if he had been, not only her parent, but a very doting one. He could not bear her to be crossed or thwarted. Mr. Templeton, who had never spoiled anything before, not even an old pen (so careful and calculating and methodical was he), did his best to spoil this beauti-

ful child, whom he could not even have the vain luxury of thinking he had produced to the admiring world. Softly, exquisitely lovely was that little girl; and every day she increased in the charm of her person and in the caressing fascination of her childish ways. Her temper was so sweet and docile that fondness and petting, however injudiciously exhibited, only seemed yet more to bring out the colours of a grateful and tender nature. Perhaps the measured kindness of more reserved affection might have been the true way of spoiling one whose instincts were all for exacting and returning love. She was a plant that suns less warm might have nipped and chilled. But beneath an uncapricious and unclouded sunshine she sprang up in a luxurious bloom of heart and sweetness of disposition.

Every one, even those who did not generally like children, delighted in this charming creature, excepting only Mr. Lumley Ferrers. But that gentleman, less mild than Pope's Narcissa,—

“To make a wash, had gladly stewed the child!”

He had seen how very common it is for a rich man, married late in life, to leave everything to a young widow and her children by her former marriage, when once attached to the latter; and he sensibly felt that he himself had but a slight hold over Templeton by the chain of the affections. He resolved, therefore, as much as possible to alienate his uncle from his young wife,—trusting that as the influence of the wife was weakened, that of the child would be lessened also,—and to raise in Templeton's vanity and ambition an ally that might supply to himself the want of love. He pursued his twofold scheme with masterly art and address. He first sought to secure the confidence and regard of the melancholy and gentle mother; and in this—for she was peculiarly unsuspicious and inexperienced—he obtained signal and complete success. His frankness of manner, his deferential attention, the art with which he warded off from her the spleen or ill-humour of Mr. Templeton, the cheerfulness that his easy gayety threw over a very gloomy house, made the

poor lady hail his visits and trust in his friendship. Perhaps she was glad of any interruption to *tête-à-têtes* with a severe and ungenial husband, who had no sympathy for the sorrows, of whatever nature they might be, which preyed upon her, and who made it a point of morality to find fault wherever he could.

The next step in Lumley's policy was to arm Templeton's vanity against his wife, by constantly refreshing his consciousness of the sacrifices he had made by marriage, and the certainty that he would have attained all his wishes had he chosen more prudently. By perpetually, but most judiciously, rubbing this sore point, he, as it were, fixed the irritability into Templeton's constitution, and it reacted on all his thoughts, aspiring or domestic. Still, however, to Lumley's great surprise and resentment, while Templeton cooled to his wife, he only warmed to her child. Lumley had not calculated enough upon the thirst and craving for affection in most human hearts; and Templeton, though not exactly an amiable man, had some excellent qualities. If he had less sensitively regarded the opinion of the world, he would neither have contracted the vocabulary of cant, nor sickened for a peerage; both his affectation of saintship, and his gnawing desire of rank, arose from an extraordinary and morbid deference to opinion, and a wish for worldly honours and respect, which he felt that his mere talents could not secure to him. But he was at bottom a kindly man,—charitable to the poor, considerate to his servants, and had within him the want to love and be loved, which is one of the desires wherewith the atoms of the universe are cemented and harmonized. Had Mrs. Templeton evinced *love* to *him*, he might have defied all Lumley's diplomacy, been consoled for worldly disadvantages, and been a good and even uxorious husband. But she evidently did not love him, though an admirable, patient, provident wife; and her daughter *did* love him,—love him as well even as she loved her mother; and the hard worldling would not have accepted a kingdom as the price of that little fountain of pure and ever-refreshing tenderness. Wise and penetrating as Lumley was, he never could thoroughly under-

stand this weakness, as he called it; for we never know men entirely, unless we have complete sympathies with men in all their natural emotions,—and Nature had left the workmanship of Lumley Ferrers unfinished and incomplete, by denying him the possibility of caring for anything but himself.

His plan for winning Templeton's esteem and deference was, however, completely triumphant. He took care that nothing in his *ménage* should appear "extravagant;" all was sober, quiet, and well-regulated. He declared that he had so managed as to live within his income; and Templeton, receiving no hint for money, nor aware that Ferrers had on the Continent consumed a considerable portion of his means, believed him. Ferrers gave a great many dinners, but he did not go on that foolish plan, which has been laid down by persons who pretend to know life, as a means of popularity,—he did not profess to give dinners better than other people. He knew that unless you are a very rich or a very great man, no folly is equal to that of thinking that you soften the hearts of your friends by soups *à la bisque*, and Johannisberg at a guinea a bottle. They all go away saying, "What right has that d—d fellow to give a better dinner than we do? What horrid taste! What ridiculous presumption!"

No; though Ferrers himself was a most scientific epicure, and held the luxury of the palate at the highest possible price, he dieted his friends on what he termed "*respectable* fare." His cook put plenty of flour into the oyster sauce; cod's-head and shoulders made his invariable fish; and four *entrées*, without flavour or pretence, were duly supplied by the pastrycook, and carefully eschewed by the host. Neither did Mr. Ferrers affect to bring about him gay wits and brilliant talkers. He confined himself to men of substantial consideration, and generally took care to be himself the cleverest person present; while he turned the conversation on serious matters crammed for the occasion,—politics, stocks, commerce, and the criminal code. Pruning his gayety, though he retained his frankness, he sought to be known as a highly-informed, painstaking man, who would be sure to rise. His connections and a certain nameless charm about him, consist-

ing chiefly in a pleasant countenance, a bold yet winning candour, and the absence of all *hauteur* or *pretence*, enabled him to assemble round this plain table, which, if it gratified no taste, wounded no self-love, a sufficient number of public men of rank and eminent men of business to answer his purpose. The situation he had chosen, so near the Houses of Parliament, was convenient to politicians, and by degrees the large, dingy drawing-rooms became a frequent resort for public men to talk over those thousand underplots by which a party is served or attacked. Thus, though not in parliament himself, Ferrers became insensibly associated with parliamentary men and things, and the ministerial party, whose politics he espoused, praised him highly, made use of him, and meant, some day or other, to do something for him.

While the career of this able and unprincipled man thus opened,—and of course the opening was not made in a day,—Ernest Maltravers was ascending by a rough, thorny, and encumbered path to that eminence on which the monuments of men are built. His success in public life was not brilliant nor sudden; for though he had eloquence and knowledge, he disdained all oratorical devices, and though he had passion and energy, he could scarcely be called a warm partisan. He met with much envy and many obstacles; and the gracious and buoyant sociality of temper and manners that had in early youth made him the idol of his contemporaries at school or college, had long since faded away into a cold, settled, and lofty, though gentle, reserve, which did not attract towards him the animal spirits of the herd. But though he spoke seldom, and heard many with half his powers more enthusiastically cheered, he did not fail of commanding attention and respect; and though no darling of cliques and parties, yet in that great body of the people who were ever the audience and tribunal to which, in letters or in politics, Maltravers appealed, there was silently growing up, and spreading wide, a belief in his upright intentions, his unpurchasable honour, and his correct and well-considered views. He felt that his name was safely invested, though the return for the capital was slow and moderate. He was contented to abide his time.

Every day he grew more attached to that only true philosophy which makes a man, as far as the world will permit, a world to himself; and from the height of a tranquil and serene self-esteem, he felt the sun shine above him, when malignant clouds spread sullen and ungenial below. He did not despise or wilfully shock opinion, neither did he fawn upon and flatter it. Where he thought the world should be humoured, he humoured; where contemned, he contemned it. There are many cases in which an honest, well-educated, high-hearted individual is a much better judge than the multitude of what is right and what is wrong; and in these matters he is not worth three straws if he suffer the multitude to bully or coax him out of his judgment. The Public, if you indulge it, is a most damnable gossip, thrusting its nose into people's concerns, where it has no right to make or meddle; and in those things where the Public is impertinent, Maltravers scorned and resisted its interference as haughtily as he would the interference of any insolent member of the insolent whole. It was this mixture of deep love and profound respect for the eternal PEOPLE, and of calm, passionless disdain for that capricious charlatan, the momentary PUBLIC, which made Ernest Maltravers an original and solitary thinker, and an actor in reality modest and benevolent, in appearance arrogant and unsocial. "Pauperism, in contradistinction to poverty," he was wont to say, "is the dependence upon other people for existence, not on our own exertions; there is a moral pauperism in the man who is dependent on others for that support of moral life, self-respect."

Wrapped in this philosophy, he pursued his haughty and lonesome way, and felt that in the deep heart of mankind, when prejudices and envies should die off, there would be a sympathy with his motives and his career. So far as his own health was concerned, the experiment had answered. No mere drudgery of business,—late hours and dull speeches,—can produce the dread exhaustion which follows the efforts of the soul to mount into the higher air of severe thought or intense imagination. Those faculties which had been overstrained now lay fallow, and the frame rapidly regained its tone. Of private comfort and inspiration Ernest knew but

little. He gradually grew estranged from his old friend Ferrers, as their habits became opposed. Cleveland lived more and more in the country, and was too well satisfied with his quondam pupil's course of life and progressive reputation to trouble him with exhortation or advice. Cesarini had grown a literary lion, whose genius was vehemently lauded by all the reviews,—on the same principle as that which induces us to praise foreign singers or dead men: we must praise something, and we don't like to praise those who jostle ourselves. Cesarini had therefore grown prodigiously conceited; swore that England was the only country for true merit, and no longer concealed his jealous anger at the wider celebrity of Maltravers. Ernest saw him squandering away his substance, and prostituting his talents to drawing-room trifles, with a compassionate sigh. He sought to warn him; but Cesarini listened to him with such impatience that he resigned the office of monitor. He wrote to De Montaigne, who succeeded no better. Cesarini was bent on playing his own game. And to one game, without a metaphor, he had at last come. His craving for excitement vented itself at Hazard, and his remaining guineas melted daily away.

But De Montaigne's letters to Maltravers consoled him for the loss of less congenial friends. The Frenchman was now an eminent and celebrated man, and his appreciation of Maltravers was sweeter to the latter than would have been the huzzas of crowds. But all this while his vanity was pleased and his curiosity roused by the continued correspondence of his unseen Egeria. That correspondence (if so it may be called, being all on one side) had now gone on for a considerable time, and he was still wholly unable to discover the author. Its tone had of late altered; it had become more sad and subdued; it spoke of the hollowness as well as the rewards of fame; and with a touch of true womanly sentiment, often hinted more at the rapture of soothing dejection than of sharing triumph. In all these letters there was the undeniable evidence of high intellect and deep feeling; they excited a strong and keen interest in Maltravers,—yet the interest was not that which made him wish to discover, in order that

he might love, the writer. They were for the most part too full of the irony and bitterness of a *man's* spirit to fascinate one who considered that gentleness was the essence of a woman's strength. *Temper* spoke in them, no less than mind and heart; and it was not the sort of temper which a man who loves women to be womanly could admire.

"I hear you often spoken of," ran one of these strange epistles, "and I am almost equally angry whether fools presume to praise or to blame you. This miserable world we live in, how I loathe and disdain it! yet I desire you to serve and to master it. Weak contradiction, effeminate paradox. Oh, rather a thousand times that you would fly from its mean temptations and poor rewards! If the desert were your dwelling-place and you wished one minister, I could renounce all — wealth, flattery, repute, womanhood — to serve you.

"I once admired you for your genius. My disease has fastened on me, and I now almost worship you for yourself. I have seen you, Ernest Maltravers, — seen you often, — and when you never suspected that these eyes were on you. Now that I have seen, I understand you better. We cannot judge men by their books and deeds. Posterity can know nothing of the beings of the past. A thousand books never written, a thousand deeds never done, are in the eyes and lips of the few greater than the herd. In that cold, abstracted gaze, that pale and haughty brow, I read the disdain of obstacles which is worthy of one who is confident of the goal. But my eyes fill with tears when I survey you! You are sad, you are alone! If failures do not mortify you, success does not elevate. Oh, Maltravers, I, woman as I am, and living in a narrow circle, I, even I, know at last that to have desires nobler, and ends more august, than others, is but to surrender waking life to morbid and melancholy dreams.

"Go more into the world, Maltravers, — go more into the world, or quit it altogether. Your enemies must be met; they accumulate, they grow strong. You are too tranquil, too slow in your steps towards the prize which should be yours, to satisfy my impatience, to satisfy your friends. Be less refined in your ambition, that you may be more immediately useful. The feet of clay, after all, are the swiftest in the race. Even Lumley Ferrers will outstrip you if you do not take heed.

"Why do I run on thus? You — you love another; yet you are not less the ideal that I could love, — if I ever loved any one. You love — and yet — well, no matter."

CHAPTER II.

WELL, but this is being only an official nobleman. No matter, 't is still being a nobleman, and that 's his aim. — ANONYMOUS WRITER OF 1772.

*La musique est le seul des talents qui jouissent de lui-même ; tous les autres veulent des témoins.*¹ — MARMONTEL.

Thus the slow ox would gaudy trappings claim. — HORACE.

MR. TEMPLETON had not obtained his peerage; and though he had met with no direct refusal, nor made even a direct application to headquarters, he was growing sullen. He had great parliamentary influence,—not close borough, illegitimate influence, but very proper orthodox influence of character, wealth, and so forth. He could return one member at least for a city, he could almost return one member for a county, and in three boroughs any activity on his part could turn the scale in a close contest. The ministers were strong, but still they could not afford to lose supporters hitherto zealous,—the example of desertion is contagious. In the town which Templeton had formerly represented, and which he now almost commanded, a vacancy suddenly occurred: a candidate started on the Opposition side and commenced a canvass; to the astonishment and panic of the Secretary of the Treasury, Templeton put forward no one, and his interest remained dormant. Lord Saxingham hurried to Lumley.

“My dear fellow, what is this? What can your uncle be about? We shall lose this place,—one of our strongholds. Bets run even.”

“Why, you see, you have all behaved very ill to my uncle. I am really sorry for it, but I can do nothing.”

“What, this confounded peerage! Will that content him, and nothing short of it?”

¹ “Music is the sole talent which gives pleasure of itself ; all the others require witnesses.”

"Nothing."

"He must have it, by Jove!"

"And even that may come too late."

"Ha! do you think so?"

"Will you leave the matter to me?"

"Certainly. You are a monstrous clever fellow, and we all esteem you."

"Sit down and write as I dictate, my dear lord."

"Well," said Lord Saxingham, seating himself at Lumley's enormous writing-table, "well, go on."

"My dear Mr. Templeton —"

"Too familiar," said Lord Saxingham.

"Not a bit; go on."

"MY DEAR MR. TEMPLETON, — We are anxious to secure your parliamentary influence in C—— to the proper quarter, — namely, to your own family, as the best defenders of the Administration which you honour by your support. We wish signally at the same time to express our confidence in your principles, and our gratitude for your countenance."

"D—d sour countenance!" muttered Lord Saxingham.

"Accordingly," continued Ferrers, "as one whose connection with you permits the liberty, allow me to request that you will suffer our joint relation, Mr. Ferrers, to be put into immediate nomination."

Lord Saxingham threw down the pen and laughed for two minutes without ceasing. "Capital, Lumley, capital! Very odd I did not think of it before."

"Each man for himself, and God for us all," returned Lumley, gravely; "pray go on, my dear lord."

"We are sure you could not have a representative that would more faithfully reflect your own opinions and our interests. One word more. A creation of peers will probably take place in the spring, among which I am sure your name would be to his Majesty a gratifying addition. The title will of course be secured to your sons, and failing the latter, to your nephew."

"With great regard and respect,

"Truly yours,

"SAXINGHAM."

"There! inscribe that 'Private and confidential,' and send it express to my uncle's villa."

"It shall be done, my dear Lumley; and this contents me as much as it does you. You are really a man to do us credit. You think it will be arranged?"

"No doubt of it."

"Well, good-day. Lumley, come to me when it is all settled. Florence is always glad to see you,—she says no one amuses her more; and I am sure that is rare praise, for she is a strange girl,—quite a Timon in petticoats."

Away went Lord Saxingham.

"Florence glad to see me!" said Lumley, throwing his arms behind him, and striding to and fro the room. "Scheme the Second begins to smile upon me behind the advancing shadow of Scheme One. If I can but succeed in keeping away other suitors from my fair cousin until I am in a condition to propose myself, why, I may carry off the greatest match in the three kingdoms. *Courage, mon brave Ferrers, courage!*"

It was late that evening when Ferrers arrived at his uncle's villa. He found Mrs. Templeton in the drawing-room seated at the piano. He entered gently; she did not hear him, and continued at the instrument. Her voice was so sweet and rich, her taste so pure, that Ferrers, who was a good judge of music, stood in delighted surprise. Often as he had now been a visitor, even an inmate, at the house, he had never before heard Mrs. Templeton play any but sacred airs; and this was one of the popular songs of sentiment. He perceived that her feeling at last overpowered her voice, and she paused abruptly, and turning round, her face was so eloquent of emotion that Ferrers was forcibly struck by its expression. He was not a man apt to feel curiosity for anything not immediately concerning himself; but he did feel curious about this melancholy and beautiful woman. There was in her usual aspect that inexpressible look of profound resignation which betokens a lasting remembrance of a bitter past: a prematurely blighted heart spoke in her eyes, in her smile, her languid and joyless step. But she performed the routine of her quiet duties with a calm and conscientious regularity

which showed that grief rather depressed than disturbed her thoughts. If her burden were heavy, custom seemed to have reconciled her to bear it without repining; and the emotion which Ferrers now traced in her soft and harmonious features was of a nature he had only once witnessed before,—namely, on the first night he had seen her, when poetry, which is the key of memory, had evidently opened a chamber haunted by mournful and troubled ghosts.

“Ah! dear madam,” said Ferrers, advancing, as he found himself discovered, “I trust I do not disturb you; my visit is unseasonable. But my uncle, where is he?”

“He has been in town all the morning; he said he should dine out, and I now expect him every minute.”

“You have been endeavouring to charm away the sense of his absence. Dare I ask you to continue to play? It is seldom that I hear a voice so sweet and skill so consummate. You must have been instructed by the best Italian masters.”

“No,” said Mrs. Templeton, with a very slight colour in her delicate cheek, “I learned young, and of one who loved music and felt it, but who was not a foreigner.”

“Will you sing me that song again? You give the words a beauty I never discovered in them; yet they, as well as the music itself, are by my poor friend whom Mr. Templeton does not like,—Maltravers.”

“Are they his also?” said Mrs. Templeton, with emotion. “It is strange I did not know it. I heard the air in the streets, and it struck me much; I inquired the name of the song and bought it. It is very strange!”

“What is strange?”

“That there is a kind of language in your friend’s music and poetry which comes home to me like words I have heard years ago! Is he young, this Mr. Maltravers?”

“Yes, he is still young.”

“And, and —”

Here Mrs. Templeton was interrupted by the entrance of her husband. He held the letter from Lord Saxingham; it was yet unopened. He seemed moody; but that was common with him. He coldly shook hands with Lumley, nodded to

his wife, found fault with the fire, and throwing himself into his easy-chair, said, "So, Lumley, I think I was a fool for taking your advice and hanging back about this new election. I see by the evening papers that there is shortly to be a creation of peers. If I had shown activity on behalf of the Government, I might have shamed them into gratitude."

"I think I was right, sir," replied Lumley; "public men are often alarmed into gratitude, seldom shamed into it. Firm votes, like old friends, are most valued when we think we are about to lose them. But what is that letter in your hand?"

"Oh! some begging petition, I suppose."

"Pardon me! it has an official look."

Templeton put on his spectacles, raised the letter, examined the address and seal, hastily opened it, and broke into an exclamation very like an oath. When he had concluded,—
"Give me your hand, nephew,—the thing is settled. I am to have the peerage. You were right; ha, ha! My dear wife, you will be my lady,—think of that! Aren't you glad? Why doesn't your ladyship smile? Where's the child,—where is she, I say?"

"Gone to bed, sir," said Mrs. Templeton, half frightened.

"Gone to bed! I must go and kiss her. Gone to bed, has she? Light that candle, Lumley." Here Mr. Templeton rang the bell. "John," said he, as the servant entered,—
"John, tell James to go the first thing in the morning to Baxter's and tell him not to paint my chariot till he hears from me. I must go kiss the child,—I must, really."

"D—the child!" muttered Lumley, as, after giving the candle to his uncle, he turned to the fire. "What the deuce has she got to do with the matter?—Charming little girl, yours, madam! How I love her! My uncle dotes on her,—no wonder!"

"He is, indeed, very, very fond of her," said Mrs. Templeton, with a sigh that seemed to come from the depth of her heart.

"Did he take a fancy to her before you were married?"

"Yes, I believe—oh, yes, certainly!"

"Her own father could not be more fond of her."

Mrs. Templeton made no answer, but lighted her candle, and wishing Lumley good-night, glided from the room.

"I wonder if my grave aunt and my grave uncle took a bite at the apple before they bought the right of the tree. It looks suspicious, — yet no, it can't be; there is nothing of the seducer or the seductive about the old fellow. It is not likely — Here he comes."

In came Templeton, and his eyes were moist and his brow relaxed.

"And how is the little angel, sir?" asked Ferrers.

"She kissed me, though I woke her up, — children are usually cross when wakened."

"Are they? — little dears! Well, sir, so I was right, then; may I see the letter?"

"There it is."

Ferrers drew his chair to the fire, and read his own production with all the satisfaction of an anonymous author.

"How kind; how considerate; how delicately put! — a double favour! But perhaps, after all, it does not express your wishes."

"In what way?"

"Why — why — about myself."

"*You!* Is there anything about *you* in it? I did not observe *that*, — let me see."

"Uncles never selfish! — mem. for commonplace book!" thought Ferrers.

The uncle knit his brows as he re-perused the letter. "This won't do, Lumley," said he, very shortly, when he had done.

"A seat in parliament is too much honour for a poor nephew, then, sir?" said Lumley, very bitterly, though he did not feel at all bitter; but it was the proper tone. "I have done all in my power to advance your ambition, and you will not even lend a hand to forward me one step in my career. But forgive me, sir, I have no right to expect it."

"Lumley," replied Templeton, kindly, "you mistake me. I think much more highly of you than I did, — much. There is a steadiness, a sobriety about you most praiseworthy, and

you shall go into parliament if you wish it; but not for C——. I will give my interest there to some other friend of the Government, and in return they can give you a Treasury borough! That is the same thing to you."

Lumley was agreeably surprised; he pressed his uncle's hand warmly, and thanked him cordially. Mr. Templeton proceeded to explain to him that it was inconvenient and expensive sitting for places where one's family was known, and Lumley fully subscribed to all.

"As for the settlement of the peerage, that is all right," said Templeton; and then he sank into a reverie from which he broke joyously. "Yes, that is all right. I have projects, objects,—this may unite them all; nothing can be better. You will be the next lord, what—I say, what title shall we have?"

"Oh, take a sounding one! You have very little landed property, I think?"

"Two thousand a year in ——shire,—bought a bargain."

"What's the name of the place?"

"Grubley."

"Lord Grubley! Baron Grubley of Grubley,—oh, atrocious! Who had the place before you?"

"Bought it of Mr. Sheepshanks,—very old family."

"But surely some old Norman once had the place?"

"Norman, yes! Henry the Second gave it to his barber,—Bertram Courval."

"That's it! that's it! Lord de Courval,—singular coincidence; descent from the old line! Herald's College soon settle all that. Lord de Courval,—nothing can sound better! There must be a village or hamlet still called Courval about the property."

"I am afraid not. There is Coddle End."

"Coddle End, Coddle End! The very thing, sir, the very thing,—clear corruption from Courval! Lord de Courval of Courval! Superb! Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Templeton; and he had hardly laughed before since he was thirty.

The relations sat long and conversed familiarly. Ferrers

slept at the villa, and his sleep was sound, for he thought little of plans once formed and half executed; it was the hunt that kept him awake, and he slept like a hound when the prey was down. Not so Templeton, who did not close his eyes all night. "Yes, yes," thought he, "I must get the fortune and the title in one line by a prudent management. Ferrers deserves what I mean to do for him. Steady, good-natured, frank, and will get on,—yes, yes; I see it all. Meanwhile I did well to prevent his standing for C——; might pick up gossip about Mrs. T., and other things that might be unpleasant. Ah, I'm a shrewd fellow!"

CHAPTER III.

Laurun. There, Marquis, there, I've done it.

Montespan. Done it! yes! Nice doings!

La Duchesse de la Vallière.

LUMLEY hastened to strike while the iron was hot. The next morning he went straight to the Treasury, saw the managing secretary,—a clever, sharp man, who, like Ferrers, carried off intrigue and manœuvre by a blunt, careless, bluff manner.

Ferrers announced that he was to stand for the free, respectable, open city of C——, with an electoral population of twenty-five hundred. A very showy place it was for a member in the old ante-reform times, and was considered a thoroughly independent borough. The secretary congratulated and complimented him.

"We have had losses lately in our elections among the larger constituencies," said Lumley.

"We have indeed,—three towns lost in the last six months. Members do die so very unseasonably."

"Is Lord Staunch yet provided for?" asked Lumley.

Now, Lord Staunch was one of the popular show-fight great guns of the Administration,—not in office, but that most useful person to all Governments, an out-and-out supporter upon the most independent principles; who was known to have refused place, and to value himself on independence; a man who helped the Government over the stile when it was seized with a temporary lameness, and who carried “great weight with him in the country.” Lord Staunch had foolishly thrown up a close borough in order to contest a large city, and had failed in the attempt. His failure was everywhere cited as a proof of the growing unpopularity of ministers.

“Is Lord Staunch yet provided for?” asked Lumley.

“Why, he must have his old seat,—Three-Oaks. Three-Oaks is a nice quiet little place,—most respectable constituency; all Staunch’s own family.”

“Just the thing for him. Yet, ’t is a pity that he did not wait to stand for C——; my uncle’s interest would have secured him.”

“Ay, I thought so the moment C—— was vacant. However, it is too late now.”

“It would be a great triumph if Lord Staunch could show that a large constituency volunteered to elect him without expense.”

“Without expense! Ah, yes, indeed! It would prove that purity of election still exists,—that British institutions are still upheld.”

“It might be done, Mr. ——.”

“Why, I thought that you —”

“Were to stand,—that is true; and it will be difficult to manage my uncle. But he loves me much,—you know I am his heir,—I believe I could do it; that is, if you think it would be a *very great* advantage to the party, and a *very great service* to the Government.”

“Why, Mr. Ferrers, it would indeed be both.”

“And in that case I could have Three-Oaks.”

“I see,—exactly so; but to give up so respectable a seat—Really it is a sacrifice.”

“Say no more; it shall be done. A deputation shall wait

on Lord Staunch directly. I will see my uncle, and a despatch shall be sent down to C—— to-night,— at least, I hope so. I must not be too confident. My uncle is an old man, — nobody but myself can manage him; I'll go this instant."

"You may be sure your kindness will be duly appreciated."

Lumley shook hands cordially with the secretary and retired. The secretary was not "humbled," nor did Lumley expect he should be. But the secretary noted this of Lumley Ferrers (and that gentleman's object was gained), that Lumley Ferrers was a man who looked out for office, and if he did tolerably well in parliament, that Lumley Ferrers was a man who ought to be *pushed*.

Very shortly afterwards the Gazette announced the election of Lord Staunch for C——, after a sharp but decisive contest. The ministerial journals rang with exulting pæans; the opposition ones called the electors of C—— all manner of hard names, and declared that Mr. Stout, Lord Staunch's opponent, would petition,— which he never did. In the midst of the hubbub Mr. Lumley Ferrers quietly and unobservedly crept into the representation of Three-Oaks.

On the night of his election he went to Lord Saxingham's; but what there happened deserves another chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

Je connais des princes du sang, des princes étrangers, des grands seigneurs, des ministres d'état, des magistrats, et des philosophes qui fileraient pour l'amour de vous. En pouvez-vous demander davantage.¹ — *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné.*

Lindore. I — I believe it will choke me; I'm in love. . . .

Now hold your tongue. Hold your tongue, I say.

Dalner. You in love? Ha! ha!

Lind. There, he laughs!

Dal. No; I am really sorry for you. — *German Play (False Delicacy).*

. . . What is here?

Gold. — SHAKSPEARE.

It happened that that evening Maltravers had, for the first time, accepted one of many invitations with which Lord Saxingham had honoured him. His lordship and Maltravers were of different political parties, nor were they in other respects adapted to each other. Lord Saxingham was a clever man in his way, but worldly even to a proverb among worldly people. That "man was born to walk erect, and look upon the stars," is an eloquent fallacy that Lord Saxingham might suffice to disprove. He seemed born to walk with a stoop; and if he ever looked upon any stars, they were those which go with a garter. Though of celebrated and historical ancestry, great rank, and some personal reputation, he had all the ambition of a *parvenu*. He had a strong regard for office, not so much from the sublime affection for that sublime thing, — power over the destinies of a glorious nation, — as because it added to that vulgar thing, — importance in his own set. He looked on his Cabinet uniform as a beadle looks on his gold lace. He also liked patronage, secured good things to distant

¹ "I know princes of the blood, foreign princes, great lords, ministers of state, magistrates, and philosophers who would even spin for love of you. What can you ask more?"

connections, got on his family to the remotest degree of relationship,—in short, he was of the earth, earthy. He did not comprehend Maltravers; and Maltravers, who every day grew prouder and prouder, despised him. Still, Lord Saxingham was told that Maltravers was a rising man, and he thought it well to be civil to rising men, of whatever party; besides, his vanity was flattered by having men who are talked of in his train. He was too busy and too great a personage to think Maltravers could be other than sincere when he declared himself, in his notes “very sorry,” or “much concerned,” to forego the honour of dining with Lord Saxingham on the, etc., etc., and therefore continued his invitations till Maltravers, from that fatality which undoubtedly regulates and controls us, at last accepted the proffered distinction.

He arrived late. Most of the guests were assembled, and after exchanging a few words with his host, Ernest fell back into the general group, and found himself in the immediate neighbourhood of Lady Florence Lascelles. This lady had never much pleased Maltravers, for he was not fond of masculine or coquettish heroines, and Lady Florence seemed to him to merit both epithets; therefore, though he had met her often since the first day he had been introduced to her, he had usually contented himself with a distant bow or a passing salutation. But now, as he turned round and saw her, she was, for a miracle, sitting alone; and in her most dazzling and noble countenance there was so evident an appearance of ill health that he was struck and touched by it. In fact, beautiful as she was, both in face and form, there was something in the eye and the bloom of Lady Florence which a skilful physician would have seen with prophetic pain; and whenever occasional illness paled the roses of the cheek and sobered the play of the lips, even an ordinary observer would have thought of the old commonplace proverb, “That the brightest beauty has the briefest life.” It was some sentiment of this kind, perhaps, that now awakened the sympathy of Maltravers. He addressed her with more marked courtesy than usual, and took a seat by her side.

"You have been to the House, I suppose, Mr. Maltravers?" said Lady Florence.

"Yes, for a short time. It is not one of our field-nights, — no division was expected; and by this time, I dare say, the House has been counted out."

"Do you like the life?"

"It has excitement," said Maltravers, evasively.

"And the excitement is of a noble character?"

"Scarcely so, I fear, — it is so made up of mean and malignant motives; there is in it so much jealousy of our friends, so much unfairness to our enemies; such readiness to attribute to others the basest objects, such willingness to avail ourselves of the poorest stratagems! The ends may be great, but the means are very ambiguous."

"I knew *you* would feel this," exclaimed Lady Florence, with a heightened colour.

"Did you?" said Maltravers, rather interested as well as surprised. "I scarcely imagined it possible that you would deign to divine secrets so insignificant."

"You did not do *me* justice, then," returned Lady Florence, with an arch yet half painful smile; "for — But I was about to be impertinent."

"Nay, say on."

"For — then — I do not imagine you to be one apt to do injustice to yourself."

"Oh, you consider me presumptuous and arrogant; but that is common report, and you do right, perhaps, to believe it."

"Was there ever any one unconscious of his own merit?" asked Lady Florence, proudly. "They who distrust themselves have good reason for it."

"You seek to cure the wound you inflicted," returned Maltravers, smiling.

"No; what I said was an apology for myself, as well as for you. You need no words to vindicate you; you are a man, and can bear out all arrogance with the royal motto, — *Dieu et mon droit*. With you, deeds can support pretension; but I am a woman, — it was a mistake of Nature."

"But what triumphs that *man* can achieve bring so imme-

diate, so palpable, a reward as those won by a woman, beautiful and admired,—who finds every room an empire, and every class her subjects?”

“It is a despicable realm.”

“What! to command, to win, to bow to your worship the greatest and the highest and the sternest; to own slaves in those whom men recognize as their lords? Is such a power despicable? If so, what power is to be envied?”

Lady Florence turned quickly round to Maltravers, and fixed on him her large dark eyes, as if she would read into his very heart. She turned away with a blush and a slight frown. “There is mockery on your lip,” said she.

Before Maltravers could answer, dinner was announced, and a foreign ambassador claimed the hand of Lady Florence. Maltravers saw a young lady, with gold oats in her very light hair, fall to his lot, and descended to the dining-room, thinking more of Lady Florence Lascelles than he had ever done before.

He happened to sit nearly opposite to the young mistress of the house (Lord Saxingham, as the reader knows, was a widower, and Lady Florence an only child) and Maltravers was that day in one of those felicitous moods in which our animal spirits search and carry up, as it were, to the surface, our intellectual gifts and acquisitions. He conversed generally and happily; but once, when he turned his eyes to appeal to Lady Florence for her opinion on some point in discussion, he caught her gaze fixed upon him with an expression that checked the current of his gayety, and cast him into a curious and bewildered revery. In that gaze there was earnest and cordial admiration; but it was mixed with so much mournfulness that the admiration lost its eloquence, and he who noticed it was rather saddened than flattered.

After dinner, when Maltravers sought the drawing-rooms, he found them filled with the customary mob of good society. In one corner he discovered Castruccio Cesarini playing on a guitar slung across his breast with a blue ribbon. The Italian sang well; many young ladies were grouped round him, amongst others Florence Lascelles. Maltravers, fond as he

was of music, looked upon Castruccio's performance as a disagreeable exhibition. He had a Quixotic idea of the dignity of talent; and though himself of a musical science and a melody of voice that would have thrown the room into ecstasies, he would as soon have turned juggler or tumbler for polite amusement as contend for the bravoës of a drawing-room. It was because he was one of the proudest men in the world that Maltravers was one of the least *vain*; he did not care a rush for applause in small things. But Cesarini would have summoned the whole world to see him play at push-pin, if he thought he played it well.

"Beautiful! divine! charming!" cried the young ladies, as Cesarini ceased; and Maltravers observed that Florence praised more earnestly than the rest, and that Cesarini's dark eyes sparkled, and his pale cheek flushed with unwonted brilliancy. Florence turned to Maltravers, and the Italian, following her eyes, frowned darkly.

"You know the Signor Cesarini," said Florence, joining Maltravers. "He is an interesting and gifted person."

"Unquestionably. I grieve to see him wasting his talents upon a soil that may yield a few short-lived flowers, without one useful plant or productive fruit."

"He enjoys the passing hour, Mr. Maltravers; and sometimes when I see the mortifications that await sterner labour, I think he is right."

"Hush!" said Maltravers; "his eyes are on us,—he is listening breathlessly for every word you utter. I fear that you have made an unconscious conquest of a poet's heart; and if so, he purchases the enjoyment of the passing hour at a fearful price."

"Nay," said Lady Florence, indifferently, "he is one of those to whom the fancy supplies the place of the heart. And if I give him an inspiration, it will be an equal luxury to him whether his lyre be strung to hope or disappointment. The sweetness of his verses will compensate to him for any bitterness in actual life."

"There are two kinds of love," answered Maltravers,—
"love, and self-love; the wounds of the last are often most

incurable in those who appear least vulnerable to the first. Ah, Lady Florence, were I privileged to play the monitor, I would venture on one warning, however much it might offend you."

"And that is —"

"To forbear coquetry."

Maltravers smiled as he spoke, but it was gravely, and at the same time he moved gently away. But Lady Florence laid her hand on his arm.

"Mr. Maltravers," said she, very softly, and with a kind of faltering in her tone, "am I wrong to say that I am anxious for your good opinion? Do not judge me harshly. I am soured, discontented, unhappy. I have no sympathy with the world. These men whom I see around me, what are they? The mass of them unfeeling and silken egotists,—ill-judging, ill-educated, well-dressed; the few who are called distinguished,—how selfish in their ambition, how passionless in their pursuits! Am I to be blamed if I sometimes exert a power over such as these which rather proves my scorn of them than my own vanity?"

"I have no right to argue with you."

"Yes, argue with me, convince me, guide me. Heaven knows that, impetuous and haughty as I am, I need a guide;"—and Lady Florence's eyes swam with tears. Ernest's prejudices against her were greatly shaken; he was even somewhat dazzled by her beauty, and touched by her unexpected gentleness. But still, his heart was not assailed, and he replied almost coldly, after a short pause,—

"Dear Lady Florence, look round the world: who so much to be envied as yourself? What sources of happiness and pride are open to you! Why, then, make to yourself causes of discontent? Why be scornful of those who cross not your path? Why not look with charity upon God's less-endowed children, beneath you as they may seem? What consolation have you in hurting the hearts or the vanities of others? Do you raise yourself even in your own estimation? You affect to be above your sex; yet what character do you despise more in women than that which you assume? Semiramis should

not be a coquette. There, now, I have offended you; I confess I am very rude."

"I am not offended," said Florence, almost struggling with her tears; and she added inly, "Ah, I am too happy!" There are some lips from which even the proudest women love to hear the censure which appears to disprove indifference.

It was at this time that Lumley Ferrers, flushed with the success of his schemes and projects, entered the room; and his quick eye fell upon that corner, in which he detected what appeared to him a very alarming flirtation between his rich cousin and Ernest Maltravers. He advanced to the spot, and with his customary frankness extended a hand to each.

"Ah, my dear and fair cousin! give me your congratulations, and ask me for my first frank,—to be bound up in a collection of autographs by distinguished senators; it will sell high one of these days. Your most obedient, Mr. Maltravers! How we shall laugh in our sleeves at the humbug of politics when you and I, the best friends in the world, sit *vis-à-vis* on opposite benches. But why, Lady Florence, have you never introduced me to your pet Italian? *Allons!* I am his match in Alfieri, whom, of course, he swears by, and whose verses, by the way, seem cut out of box-wood,—the hardest material for turning off that sort of machinery that invention ever hit on."

Thus saying, Ferrers contrived, as he thought, very cleverly, to divide a pair that he much feared were justly formed to meet by Nature; and to his great joy, Maltravers shortly afterwards withdrew.

Ferrers, with the happy ease that belonged to his complacent though plotting character soon made Cesarini at home with him; and two or three slighting expressions which the former dropped with respect to Maltravers, coupled with some outrageous compliments to the Italian, completely won the heart of the poet. The brilliant Florence was more silent and subdued than usual, and her voice was softer, though graver, when she replied to Castruccio's eloquent appeals. Castruccio was one of those men who *talk fine*. By degrees, Lumley lapsed into silence, and listened to what took place

between Lady Florence and the Italian, while appearing to be deep in "The Views of the Rhine," which lay on the table.

"Ah," said the latter, in his soft native tongue, "could you know how I watch every shade of that countenance which makes my heaven! Is it clouded, night is with me; is it radiant, I am as the Persian gazing on the sun!"

"Why do you speak thus to me? Were you not a poet, I might be angry."

"You were not angry when the English poet, that cold Maltravers, spoke to you perhaps as boldly."

Lady Florence drew up her haughty head. "Signor," said she, checking, however, her first impulse, and with mildness, "Mr. Maltravers neither flatters nor—"

"Presumes, you were about to say," said Cesarini, grinding his teeth. "But it is well! Once you were less chilling to the utterance of my deep devotion."

"Never, Signor Cesarini, never, but when I thought it was but the common gallantry of your nation; let me think so still."

"No, proud woman," said Cesarini, fiercely; "no,—hear the truth."

Lady Florence rose indignantly.

"Hear me," he continued. "I—I, the poor foreigner, the despised minstrel, dare to lift up my eyes to you! I love you!"

Never had Florence Lascelles been so humiliated and confounded. However she might have amused herself with the vanity of Cesarini, she had not given him, as she thought, the warrant to address her—the great Lady Florence, the prize of dukes and princes—in this hardy manner; she almost fancied him insane. But the next moment she recalled the warning of Maltravers, and felt as if her punishment had commenced.

"You will think and speak more calmly, sir, when we meet again;" and so saying she swept away.

Cesarini remained rooted to the spot, with his dark countenance expressing such passions as are rarely seen in the aspects of civilized men.

"Where do you lodge, Signor Cesarini?" asked the bland, familiar voice of Ferrers. "Let us walk part of the way together,—that is, when you are tired of these hot rooms."

Cesarini groaned. "You are ill," continued Ferrers; "the air will revive you,—come." He glided from the room, and the Italian mechanically followed him. They walked together for some moments in silence side by side, in a clear, lovely moonlight night. At length Ferrers said: "Pardon me, my dear signor, but you may already have observed that I am a very frank, odd sort of fellow. I see you are caught by the charms of my cruel cousin. Can I serve you in any way?"

A man at all acquainted with the world in which we live would have been suspicious of such cordiality in the cousin of an heiress towards a very unsuitable aspirant. But Cesarini, like many indifferent poets (but like few good ones), had no common-sense. He thought it quite natural that a man who admired his poetry so much as Lumley had declared he did, should take a lively interest in his welfare; and he therefore replied warmly, "Oh, sir, this is indeed a crushing blow! I dreamed she loved me. She was ever flattering and gentle when she spoke to me, and in verse already I had told her of my love, and met with no rebuke."

"Did your verses really and plainly declare love, and in your own person?"

"Why, the sentiment was veiled, perhaps,—put into the mouth of a fictitious character, or conveyed in an allegory."

"Oh!" ejaculated Ferrers, thinking it very likely that the gorgeous Florence, hymned by a thousand bards, had done little more than cast a glance over the lines that had cost poor Cesarini such anxious toil, and inspired him with such daring hope. "Oh! and to-night she was more severe. She is a terrible coquette, *la belle Florence*! But perhaps you have a rival?"

"I feel it—I saw it—I know it."

"Whom do you suspect?"

"That accursed Maltravers! He crosses me in every path; my spirit quails beneath his whenever we encounter. I read my doom."

"If it be Maltravers," said Ferrers, gravely, "the danger cannot be great; Florence has seen but little of him, and he does not admire her much. But she is a great match, and he is ambitious. We must guard against this betimes, Cesarini; for know that I dislike Maltravers as much as you do, and will cheerfully aid you in any plan to blight his hopes in that quarter."

"Generous, noble friend! Yet he is richer, better-born than I."

"That may be; but to one in Lady Florence's position, all minor grades of rank in her aspirants seem pretty well levelled. Come, I don't tell you that I would not sooner she married a countryman and an equal, but I have taken a liking to you, and I detest Maltravers. She is very romantic,—fond of poetry to a passion; writes it herself, I fancy. Oh! you'll just suit her; but, alas! how will you see her?"

"See her! What mean you?"

"Why, have you not declared love to-night? I thought I overheard you. Can you for a moment fancy that after such an avowal Lady Florence will again receive you,—that is, if she mean to reject your suit?"

"Fool that I was! But no,—she must, she shall."

"Be persuaded; in this country violence will not do. Take my advice,—write an humble apology, confess your fault, invoke her pity; and declaring that you renounce forever the character of a lover, implore still to be acknowledged as a friend. Be quiet, now, hear me out,—I am older than you; I know my cousin. This will pique her; your modesty will soothe, while your coldness will arouse, her vanity. Meanwhile, you will watch the progress of Maltravers,—I will be by your elbow; and between us, to use a homely phrase, we will do for him. Then you may have your opportunity, clear stage, and fair play."

Cesarini was at first rebellious; but at length even he saw the policy of the advice. But Lumley would not leave him till the advice was adopted. He made Castruccio accompany him to a club, dictated the letter to Florence, and undertook its charge. This was not all.

"It is also necessary," said Lumley, after a short but thoughtful silence, "that you should write to Maltravers."

"And for what?"

"I have my reasons. Ask him, in a frank and friendly spirit, his opinion of Lady Florence; state your belief that she loves you, and inquire ingenuously what he thinks your chances of happiness in such a union."

"But why this?"

"His answer may be useful," returned Lumley, musingly. "Stay, I will dictate the letter."

Cesarini wondered and hesitated; but there was that about Lumley Ferrers which had already obtained command over the weak and passionate poet. He wrote, therefore, as Lumley dictated, beginning with some commonplace doubts as to the happiness of marriage in general, excusing himself for his recent coldness towards Maltravers, and asking him his confidential opinion both as to Lady Florence's character and his own chances of success.

This letter, like the former one, Lumley sealed and despatched.

"You perceive," he then said briefly to Cesarini, "that it is the object of this letter to entrap Maltravers into some plain and honest avowal of his dislike to Lady Florence; we may make good use of such expressions hereafter, if he should ever prove a rival. And now go home to rest; you look exhausted. Adieu, my new friend."

"I have long had a presentiment," said Lumley to his councillor, SELF, as he walked to Great George Street, "that that wild girl has conceived a romantic fancy for Maltravers. But I can easily prevent such an accident ripening into misfortune. Meanwhile, I have secured a tool if I want one. By Jove, what an ass that poet is! But so was Cassio; yet Iago made use of him. If Iago had been born now, and dropped that foolish fancy for revenge, what a glorious fellow he would have been! Prime minister at least!"

Pale, haggard, exhausted, Castruccio Cesarini, traversing a length of way, arrived at last at a miserable lodging in the suburb of Chelsea. His fortune was now gone,—gone in supply

ing the poorest food to a craving and imbecile vanity; gone, that its owner might seem what Nature never meant him for, — the elegant Lothario, the graceful man of pleasure, the troubadour of modern life; gone in horses and jewels and fine clothes and gaming and printing unsalable poems on gilt-edged vellum; gone, that he might not be a greater, but a more fashionable man than Ernest Maltravers! Such is the common destiny of those poor adventurers who confine fame to boudoirs and saloons. No matter whether they be poets or dandies, wealthy *parvenus* or aristocratic cadets, all equally prove the adage that the wrong paths to reputation are strewn with the wrecks of peace, fortune, happiness, and too often honour! And yet this poor young man had dared to hope for the hand of Florence Lascelles! He had the common notion of foreigners that English girls marry for love, are very romantic; that within the three seas heiresses are as plentiful as blackberries; and for the rest, his vanity had been so pampered that it now insinuated itself into every fibre of his intellectual and moral system.

Cesarini looked cautiously round as he arrived at his door, for he fancied that even in that obscure place persons might be anxious to catch a glimpse of the celebrated poet, and he concealed his residence from all, dined on a roll when he did not dine out, and left his address at "The Travellers." He looked round, I say, and he did observe a tall figure wrapped in a cloak, that had indeed followed him from a distant and more populous part of the town. But the figure turned round and vanished instantly. Cesarini mounted to his second floor. And about the middle of the next day a messenger left a letter at his door, containing one hundred pounds in a blank envelope. Cesarini knew not the writing of the address; his pride was deeply wounded. Amidst all his penury, he had not even applied to his own sister. Could it come from her, from De Montaigne? He was lost in conjecture. He put the remittance aside for a few days, for he had something fine in him, the poor poet; but bills grew pressing, and necessity hath no law.

Two days afterwards, Cesarini brought to Ferrers the an-

swer he had received from Maltravers. Lumley had rightly foreseen that the high spirit of Ernest would conceive some indignation at the coquetry of Florence in beguiling the Italian into hopes never to be realized, and that he would express himself openly and warmly. He did so, however, with more gentleness than Lumley had anticipated.

"This is not exactly the thing," said Ferrers, after twice reading the letter; "still, it may hereafter be a strong card in our hands,—we will keep it."

So saying, he locked the letter up in his desk, and Cesarini soon forgot its existence.

CHAPTER V.

SHE was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight, —
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament. — WORDSWORTH.

MALTRAVERS did not see Lady Florence again for some weeks; meanwhile, Lumley Ferrers made his *début* in parliament. Rigidly adhering to his plan of acting on a deliberate system, and not prone to overrate himself, Mr. Ferrers did not, like most promising new members, try the hazardous ordeal of a great first speech. Though bold, fluent, and ready, he was not eloquent; and he knew that on great occasions, when great speeches are wanted, great guns like to have the fire to themselves. Neither did he split upon the opposite rock of "promising young men," who stick to "the business of the House" like leeches, and quibble on details; in return for which labour they are generally voted bores, who can never do anything remarkable. But he spoke frequently, shortly, courageously, and with a strong dash of good-humoured personality. He was the man whom a minister could get to say something which other people did not like to say; and he did so with a frank fearlessness that carried

off any seeming violation of good taste. He soon became a very popular speaker in the parliamentary clique, especially with the gentlemen who crowd the bar, and never want to hear the argument of the debate. Between him and Maltravers a visible coldness now existed; for the latter looked upon his old friend (whose principles of logic led him even to republicanism, and who had been accustomed to accuse Ernest of temporizing with plain truths if he demurred to their application to artificial states of society) as a cold-blooded and hypocritical adventurer; while Ferrers, seeing that Ernest could now be of no further use to him, was willing enough to drop a profitless intimacy. Nay, he thought it would be wise to pick a quarrel with him, if possible, as the best means of banishing a supposed rival from the house of his noble relation, Lord Saxingham. But no opportunity for that step presented itself; so Lumley kept a fit of convenient rudeness, or an impromptu sarcasm, in reserve, if ever it should be wanted.

The season and the session were alike drawing to a close, when Maltravers received a pressing invitation from Cleveland to spend a week at his villa, which he assured Ernest would be full of agreeable people; and as all business productive of debate or division was over, Maltravers was glad to obtain fresh air and a change of scene. Accordingly, he sent down his luggage and favourite books, and one afternoon in early August rode alone towards Temple Grove. He was much dissatisfied, perhaps disappointed, with his experience of public life; and with his high-wrought and over-refining views of the deficiencies of others more prominent, he was in a humour to mingle also censure of himself for having yielded too much to the doubts and scruples that often in the early part of their career beset the honest and sincere in the turbulent whirl of politics, and ever tend to make the robust hues that should belong to action —

“Sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought.”

His mind was working its way slowly towards those conclusions which sometimes ripen the best practical men out of

the most exalted theorists; and perhaps he saw before him the pleasing prospect flatteringly exhibited to another when he complained of being too honest for party,—namely, “of becoming a very pretty rascal in time!”

For several weeks he had not heard from his unknown correspondent, and the time was come when he missed those letters, now continued for more than two years, and which, in their eloquent mixture of complaint, exhortation, despondent gloom, and declamatory enthusiasm, had often soothed him in dejection, and made him more sensible of triumph. While revolving in his mind thoughts connected with these subjects,—and somehow or other, with his more ambitious reveries were always mingled musings of curiosity respecting his correspondent,—he was struck by the beauty of a little girl, of about eleven years old, who was walking with a female attendant on the footpath that skirted the road. I said that he was struck by her beauty; but that is a wrong expression: it was rather the charm of her countenance than the perfection of her features which arrested the gaze of Maltravers,—a charm that might not have existed for others, but was inexpressibly attractive to him, and was so much apart from the vulgar fascination of mere beauty that it would have equally touched a chord at his heart if coupled with homely features or a bloomless cheek. This charm was in a wonderful innocent and dove-like softness of expression. We all form to ourselves some beau-ideal of the “fair spirit” we desire as our earthly “minister,” and somewhat capriciously gauge and proportion our admiration of living shapes according as the beau-ideal is more or less embodied or approached. Beauty of a stamp that is not familiar to the dreams of our fancy may win the cold homage of our judgment, while a look, a feature, a something that realizes and calls up a boyish vision, and assimilates even distantly to the picture we wear within us, has a loveliness peculiar to our eyes, and kindles an emotion that almost seems to belong to memory. It is this which the Platonists felt when they wildly supposed that souls attracted to each other on earth had been united in an earlier being and a diviner sphere; and there was in the young face

on which Ernest gazed precisely this ineffable harmony with his preconceived notions of the beautiful. Many a nightly and noonday reverie was realized in those mild yet smiling eyes of the darkest blue; in that ingenuous breadth of brow, with its slightly pencilled arches, and the nose, not cut in that sharp and clear symmetry which looks so lovely in marble, but usually gives to flesh and blood a decided and hard character that better becomes the sterner than the gentler sex,—no, not moulded in the pure Grecian, nor in the pure Roman cast, but small, delicate, with the least possible inclination to turn upward, that was only to be detected in one position of the head, and served to give a prettier archness to the sweet, flexile lips, which, from the gentleness of their repose, seemed to smile unconsciously, but rather from a happy constitutional serenity than from the giddiness of mirth. Such was the character of this fair child's countenance, on which Maltravers turned and gazed involuntarily and reverently, with something of the admiring delight with which we look upon the Virgin of a Raphael, or the sunset landscape of a Claude. The girl did not appear to feel any premature coquetry at the evident, though respectful, admiration she excited. She met the eyes bent upon her, brilliant and eloquent as they were, with a fearless and unsuspecting gaze, and pointed out to her companion, with all a child's quick and unrestrained impulse, the shining and raven gloss, the arched and haughty neck, of Ernest's beautiful Arabian.

Now, there happened between Maltravers and the young object of his admiration a little adventure, which served, perhaps, to fix in her recollection this short encounter with a stranger; for certain it is that, years after, she did remember both the circumstances of the adventure and the features of Maltravers. She wore one of those large straw-hats which look so pretty upon children, and the warmth of the day made her untie the strings which confined it. A gentle breeze arose, as by a turn in the road the country became more open, and suddenly wafted the hat from its proper post almost to the hoofs of Ernest's horse. The child naturally made a spring forward to arrest the deserter, and her foot slipped down the

bank, which was rather steeply raised above the road. She uttered a low cry of pain. To dismount, to regain the prize, and to restore it to its owner was with Ernest the work of a moment; the poor girl had twisted her ankle, and was leaning upon her servant for support. But when she saw the anxiety, and almost the alarm, upon the stranger's face (and her exclamation of pain had literally thrilled his heart, so much and so unaccountably had she excited his interest), she made an effort at self-control not common at her years, and with a forced smile assured him she was not much hurt, that it was nothing, that she was just at home.

"Oh, miss!" said the servant, "I am sure you are very bad. Dear heart, how angry master will be! It was not my fault, was it, sir?"

"Oh, no, it was not your fault, Margaret; don't be frightened,—Papa sha'n't blame you. But I'm much better now." So saying, she tried to walk; but the effort was in vain, she turned yet more pale, and though she struggled to prevent a shriek, the tears rolled down her cheeks.

It was very odd, but Maltravers had never felt more touched. The tears stood in his own eyes; he longed to carry her in his arms, but, child as she was, a strange kind of nervous timidity forbade him. Margaret, perhaps, expected it of him; for she looked hard in his face before she attempted a burden to which, being a small, slight person, she was by no means equal. However, after a pause she took up her charge, who, ashamed of her tears, and almost overcome with pain, nestled her head in the woman's bosom, and Maltravers walked by her side, while his docile and well-trained horse followed at a distance, every now and then putting its fore-legs on the bank and cropping away a mouthful of leaves from the hedgerow.

"Oh, Margaret!" said the little sufferer, "I cannot bear it, indeed I cannot." And Maltravers observed that Margaret had permitted the lame foot to hang down unsupported, so that the pain must indeed have been scarcely bearable. He could restrain himself no longer.

"You are not strong enough to carry her," said he, sharply,

to the servant; and the next moment the child was in his arms. Oh, with what anxious tenderness he bore her! and he was so happy when she turned her face to him and smiled, and told him she now scarcely felt the pain. If it were possible to be in love with a child of eleven years old, Maltravers was almost in love. His pulses trembled as he felt her pure breath on his cheek, and her rich, beautiful hair was waved by the breeze across his lips. He hushed his voice to a whisper as he poured forth all the soothing and comforting expressions which give a natural eloquence to persons fond of children,—and Ernest Maltravers was the idol of children; he understood and sympathized with them; he had a great deal of the child himself beneath the rough and cold husk of his proud reserve. At length they came to a lodge, and Margaret, eagerly inquiring “whether master and missus were at home,” seemed delighted to hear they were not. Ernest, however, insisted on bearing his charge across the lawn to the house, which, like most suburban villas, was but a stone’s throw from the lodge; and receiving the most positive promise that surgical advice should be immediately sent for, he was forced to content himself with laying the sufferer on a sofa in the drawing-room; and she thanked him so prettily, and assured him she was so much easier, that he would have given the world to kiss her. The child had completed her conquest over him by being above the child’s ordinary littleness of making the worst of things, in order to obtain the consequence and dignity of being pitied,—she was evidently unselfish, and considerate for others. He did kiss her, but it was the hand that he kissed, and no cavalier ever kissed his lady’s hand with more respect; and then, for the first time, the child blushed,—then, for the first time, she felt as if the day would come when she should be a child no longer! Why was this? Perhaps because it is an era in life,—the first sign of a tenderness that inspires respect, not familiarity.

“If ever again I could be in love,” said Maltravers, as he spurred on his road, “I really think it would be with that exquisite child. My feeling is more like that of love at first sight than any emotion which beauty ever caused in me,

Alice — Valerie — no; the *first* sight of them did not — But what folly is this? A child of eleven, and I verging upon thirty!"

Still, however, folly as it might be, the image of that young girl haunted Maltravers for many days, till change of scene, the distractions of society, the grave thoughts of manhood, and, above all, a series of exciting circumstances about to be narrated, gradually obliterated a strange and most delightful impression. He had learned, however, that Mr. Templeton was the proprietor of the villa which was the child's home. He wrote to Ferrers to narrate the incident and to inquire after the sufferer. In due time he heard from that gentleman that the child was recovered, and gone with Mr. and Mrs. Templeton to Brighton for change of air and sea-bathing.

BOOK VIII.

Ἐνθα — Παλλὰς ἔμολε καὶ
Δουλιόφρων Κύπρις. — EURIPIDES: *Iphig. in Aul.*, 1, 1310.

“ Whither come Wisdom’s queen
And the snare-weaving Love ? ”

CHAPTER I.

Notitiam primosque gradus vicinia fecit.¹ — OVID.

CLEVELAND’S villa *was* full, and of persons usually called agreeable. Amongst the rest was Lady Florence Lascelles. The wise old man had ever counselled Maltravers not to marry too young; but neither did he wish him to put off that momentous epoch of life till all the bloom of heart and emotion was passed away. He thought, with the old law-givers, that thirty was the happy age for forming a connection, in the choice of which, with the reason of manhood, ought perhaps to be blended the passion of youth. And he saw that few men were more capable than Maltravers of the true enjoyments of domestic life. He had long thought, also, that none were more calculated to sympathize with Ernest’s views, and appreciate his peculiar character, than the gifted and brilliant Florence Lascelles. Cleveland looked with toleration on her many eccentricities of thought and conduct,—eccentricities which he imagined would rapidly melt away beneath the influence of that attachment which usually operates so great a change in women, and where it is strongly and in-

¹ “ Neighbourhood caused the acquaintance and first introduction.”

tensely felt, moulds even those of the most obstinate character into compliance or similitude with the sentiments or habits of its object.

The stately self-control of Maltravers was, he conceived, precisely that quality that gives to men an unconscious command over the very thoughts of the woman whose affection they win; while, on the other hand, he hoped that the fancy and enthusiasm of Florence would tend to render sharper and more practical an ambition which seemed to the sober man of the world too apt to refine upon the means, and to *cui-bono* the objects of worldly distinction. Besides, Cleveland was one who thoroughly appreciated the advantages of wealth and station; and the rank and the dower of Florence were such as would force Maltravers into a position in social life which could not fail to make new exactions upon talents which Cleveland fancied were precisely those adapted rather to command than to serve. In Ferrers he recognized a man to *get* into power,—in Maltravers one by whom power, if ever attained, would be wielded with dignity, and exerted for great uses. Something, therefore, higher than mere covetousness for the vulgar interests of Maltravers made Cleveland desire to secure to him the heart and hand of the great heiress; and he fancied that, whatever might be the obstacle, it would not be in the will of Lady Florence herself. He prudently resolved, however, to leave matters to their natural course. He hinted nothing to one party or the other. No place for falling in love like a large country-house, and no time for it, amongst the indolent well-born, like the close of a London season, when, jaded by small cares, and sickened of hollow intimacies, even the coldest may well yearn for the tones of affection,—the excitement of an honest emotion.

Somehow or other, it happened that Florence and Ernest, after the first day or two, were constantly thrown together. She rode on horseback, and Maltravers was by her side; they made excursions on the river, and they sat on the same bench in the gliding pleasure-boat. In the evenings the younger guests, with the assistance of the neighbouring families, often got up a dance in a temporary pavilion built out of the dining-

room. Ernest never danced. Florence did at first; but once, as she was conversing with Maltravers when a gay guardsman came to claim her promised hand in the waltz, she seemed struck by a grave change in Ernest's face.

"Do you never waltz?" she asked, while the guardsman was searching for a corner wherein safely to deposit his hat.

"No," said he; "yet there is no impropriety in *my* waltzing."

"And you mean that there is in mine?"

"Pardon me,— I did not say so."

"But you think it."

"Nay, on consideration, I am glad, perhaps, that you do waltz."

"You are mysterious."

"Well, then, I mean that you are precisely the woman I would never fall in love with. And I feel the danger is lessened when I see you destroy any one of my illusions, or, I ought to say, attack any one of my prejudices."

Lady Florence coloured; but the guardsman and the music left her no time for reply. However, after that night she waltzed no more. She was unwell; she declared she was ordered not to dance; and so quadrilles were relinquished, as well as the waltz.

Maltravers could not but be touched and flattered by this regard for his opinion; but Florence contrived to testify it so as to forbid acknowledgment, since another motive had been found for it. The second evening after that commemorated by Ernest's candid rudeness, they chanced to meet in the conservatory, which was connected with the ballroom; and Ernest, pausing to inquire after her health, was struck by the listless and dejected sadness which spoke in her tone and countenance as she replied to him.

"Dear Lady Florence," said he, "I fear you are worse than you will confess. You should shun these draughts. You owe it to your friends to be more careful of yourself."

"Friends," said Lady Florence, bitterly,— "I have no friends! Even my poor father would not absent himself from a Cabinet dinner a week after I was dead. But that is

the condition of public life,—its hot and searing blaze puts out the lights of all lesser but not unholy affection. Friends! Fate, that made Florence Lascelles the envied heiress, denied her brothers, sisters; and the hour of her birth lost her even the love of a mother! Friends! where shall I find them?”

As she ceased, she turned to the open casement and stepped out into the veranda, and by the trembling of her voice Ernest felt that she had done so to hide or to suppress her tears.

“Yet,” said he, following her, “there is one class of more distant friends whose interest Lady Florence Lascelles cannot fail to secure, however she may disdain it. Among the humblest of that class suffer me to rank myself. Come, I assume the privilege of advice: the night air is a luxury you must not indulge.”

“No, no; it refreshes me, it soothes. You misunderstand me; I have no illness that still skies and sleeping flowers can increase.”

Maltravers, as is evident, was not in love with Florence, but he could not fail, brought, as he had lately been, under the direct influence of her rare and prodigal gifts, mental and personal, to feel for her a strong and even affectionate interest; the very frankness with which he was accustomed to speak to her, and the many links of communion there necessarily were between himself and a mind so naturally powerful and so richly cultivated, had already established their acquaintance upon an intimate footing.

“I cannot restrain you, Lady Florence,” said he, half smiling, “but my conscience will not let me be an accomplice. I will turn king’s evidence, and hunt out Lord Saxingham to send him to you.”

Lady Florence, whose face was averted from his, did not appear to hear him.

“And you, Mr. Maltravers,” turning quickly round, “you,—have you friends? Do you feel that there are, I do not say public, but private affections and duties, for which life is made less a possession than a trust?”

“Lady Florence, no. I have friends, it is true, and Cleveland is of the nearest; but the life within life,—the second

self, in whom we vest the right and mastery over our own being,— I know it not. But is it," he added, after a pause, "a rare privation? Perhaps it is a happy one. I have learned to lean on my own soul, and not look elsewhere for the reeds that a wind can break."

"Ah, it is a cold philosophy; you may reconcile yourself to its wisdom in the world, in the hum and shock of men, but in solitude, with Nature, ah, no! While the mind alone is occupied, you may be contented with the pride of stoicism; but there are moments when the *heart* awakens as from a sleep, — awakens like a frightened child,—to feel itself alone and in the dark."

Ernest was silent, and Florence continued, in an altered voice: "This is a strange conversation, and you must think me indeed a wild, romance-reading person, as the world is apt to call me. But if I live, I — Pshaw! life denies ambition to women."

"If a woman like you, Lady Florence, should ever love, it will be one in whose career you may perhaps find that noblest of all ambitions, the ambition women only feel,—the ambition for another."

"Ah, but I shall never love," said Lady Florence, and her cheek grew pale as the starlight shone on it. "Still, perhaps," she added quickly, "I may at least know the blessing of friendship. Why, now," and here, approaching Maltravers, she laid her hand with a winning frankness on his arm,— "why, now, should not we be to each other as if love, as you call it, were not a thing for earth, and friendship supplied its place? There is no danger of our falling in love with each other. You are not vain enough to expect it in me, and I, you know, am a coquette; let us be friends, confidants,— at least till you marry, or I give another the right to control my friendships and monopolize my secrets."

Maltravers was startled; the sentiment Florence addressed to him, he, in words not dissimilar, had once addressed to Valerie.

"The world," said he, kissing the hand that yet lay on his arm, "the world will —"

"Oh, you men! The world, the world! Everything gentle, everything pure, everything noble, high-wrought, and holy, is to be squared and cribbed and maimed to the rule and measure of the world! The world — are you too its slave? Do you not despise its hollow cant, its methodical hypocrisy?"

"Heartily!" said Ernest Maltravers, almost with fierceness. "No man ever so scorned its false gods and its miserable creeds, its war upon the weak, its fawning upon the great, its ingratitude to benefactors, its sordid league with mediocrity against excellence. Yes, in proportion as I love mankind, I despise and detest that worse than Venetian oligarchy which mankind set over them and call 'THE WORLD.'"

And then it was, warmed by the excitement of released feelings long and carefully shrouded, that this man, ordinarily so calm and self-possessed, poured burningly and passionately forth all those tumultuous and almost tremendous thoughts which, however much we may regulate, control, or disguise them, lurk deep within the souls of all of us, the seeds of the eternal war between the natural man and the artificial, between our wilder genius and our social conventionalities, — thoughts that from time to time break forth into the harbingers of vain and fruitless revolutions, impotent struggles against destiny; thoughts that good and wise men would be slow to promulge and propagate, for they are of a fire which burns as well as brightens, and which spreads from heart to heart as a spark spreads amidst flax; thoughts which are rifest where natures are most high, but belong to truths that virtue dare not tell aloud. And as Maltravers spoke, with his eyes flashing almost intolerable light, his breast heaving, his form dilated, never to the eyes of Florence Lascelles did he seem so great; the chains that bound the strong limbs of his spirit seemed snapped asunder, and all his soul was visible and towering, as a thing that has escaped slavery, and lifts its crest to heaven and feels that it is free.

That evening saw a new bond of alliance between these two persons: young, handsome, and of opposite sexes, they agreed to be friends, and nothing more. Fools!

CHAPTER II.

IDEM velle, et idem nolle, ea demum firma amicitia est.¹ — SALLUST.

Carlos. That letter.

Princess Eboli. Oh, I shall die. Return it instantly.

SCHILLER: *Don Carlos.*

IT seemed as if the compact Maltravers and Lady Florence had entered into removed whatever embarrassment and reserve had previously existed. They now conversed with an ease and freedom not common in persons of different sexes before they have passed their grand climateric. Ernest in ordinary life, like most men of warm emotions and strong imagination, if not taciturn, was at least guarded. It was as if a weight were taken from his breast when he found one person who could understand him best when he was most candid. His eloquence, his poetry, his intense and concentrated enthusiasm, found a voice. He could talk to an individual as he would have written to the public,—a rare happiness to the men of books.

Florence seemed to recover her health and spirits as by a miracle; yet she was more gentle, more subdued, than of old,—there was less effort to shine, less indifference whether she shocked. Persons who had not met her before, wondered why she was dreaded in society. But at times a great natural irritability of temper, a quick suspicion of the motives of those around her, an imperious and obstinate vehemence of will, were visible to Maltravers, and served, perhaps, to keep him heart-whole. He regarded her through the eyes of the intellect, not those of the passions; he thought not of her as a woman; her very talents, her very grandeur of idea and power of purpose, while they delighted him in conversation, diverted his imagination from dwelling on her beauty. He

¹ "To will the same thing and not to will the same thing, that at length is firm friendship."

looked on her as something apart from her sex,—a glorious creature spoiled by being a woman. He once told her so, laughing, and Florence considered it a compliment. Poor Florence, her scorn of her sex avenged her sex, and robbed her of her proper destiny!

Cleveland silently observed their intimacy, and listened with a quiet smile to the gossips who pointed out *tête-à-têtes* by the terrace, and loiterings by the lawn, and predicted what would come of it all. Lord Saxingham was blind. But his daughter was of age, in possession of her princely fortune, and had long made him sensible of her independence of temper. His lordship, however, thoroughly misunderstood the character of her pride, and felt fully convinced she would marry no one less than a duke; as for flirtations, he thought them natural and innocent amusements. Besides, he was very little at Temple Grove. He went to London every morning after breakfasting in his own room, came back to dine, play at whist, and talk good-humoured nonsense to Florence in his dressing-room for the three minutes that took place between his sipping his wine-and-water and the appearance of his valet. As for the other guests, it was not their business to do more than gossip with each other; and so Florence and Maltravers went on their way unmolested, though not unobserved. Maltravers, not being himself in love, never fancied that Lady Florence loved him, or that she would be in any danger of doing so. This is a mistake a man often commits,—a woman never. A woman always knows when she is loved, though she often imagines she is loved when she is not. Florence was not happy, for happiness is a calm feeling; but she was excited with a vague, wild, intoxicating emotion.

She had learned from Maltravers that she had been misinformed by Ferrers, and that no other claimed empire over his heart; and whether or not he loved her, still for the present they seemed all in all to each other: she lived but for the present day,—she would not think of the morrow.

Since that severe illness which had tended so much to alter Ernest's mode of life, he had not come before the public as

an author. Latterly, however, the old habit had broken out again. With the comparative idleness of recent years, the ideas and feelings which crowd so fast on the poetical temperament, once indulged, had accumulated within him to an excess that demanded vent. For with some, to write is not a vague desire, but an imperious destiny. The fire is kindled and must break forth; the wings are fledged, and the birds must leave their nest. The communication of thought to man is implanted as an instinct in those breasts to which Heaven has intrusted the solemn agencies of genius. In the work which Maltravers now composed he consulted Florence. His confidence delighted her,—it was a compliment she could appreciate. Wild, fervid, impassioned, was that work,—a brief and holiday creation; the youngest and most beloved of the children of his brain. And as day by day the bright design grew into shape, and thought and imagination found themselves “local habitations,” Florence felt as if she were admitted into the palace of the genii, and made acquainted with the mechanism of those spells and charms with which the preternatural powers of mind design the witchery of the world. Ah, how different in depth and majesty were those intercommunications of idea between Ernest Maltravers and a woman scarcely inferior to himself in capacity and acquirement, from that bridge of shadowy and dim sympathies which the enthusiastic boy had once built up between his own poetry of knowledge and Alice’s poetry of love!

It was one late afternoon in September, when the sun was slowly going down its western way, that Lady Florence, who had been all that morning in her own room paying off, as she said, the dull arrears of correspondence, rather on Lord Saxingham’s account than her own; for he punctiliously exacted from her the most scrupulous attention to cousins fifty times removed, provided they were rich, clever, well off, or in any way of consequence,—it was one afternoon that, relieved from these avocations, Lady Florence strolled through the grounds with Cleveland. The gentlemen were still in the stubble-fields, the ladies were out in barouches and pony phaetons, and Cleveland and Lady Florence were alone.

A propos of Florence's epistolary employment, their conversation fell upon that most charming species of literature, which joins with the interest of a novel the truth of a history,—the French memoir and letter writers. It was a part of literature in which Cleveland was thoroughly at home.

"Those agreeable and polished gossips," said he, "how well they contrived to introduce nature into art! Everything artificial seemed so natural to them. They even feel by a kind of clockwork, which seems to go better than the heart itself. Those pretty sentiments, those delicate gallantries, of Madame de Sévigné to her daughter, how amiable they are; but, somehow or other, I can never fancy them the least motherly. What an ending for a maternal epistle is that elegant compliment: '*Songez que de tous les cœurs où vous regnez, il n'y en a aucun où votre empire soit si bien établi que dans le mien.*'"¹ I can scarcely fancy Lord Saxingham writing so to you, Lady Florence."

"No, indeed," replied Lady Florence, smiling. "Neither papas nor mammas in England are much addicted to compliment; but I confess I like preserving a sort of gallantry even in our most familiar connections. Why should we not carry the imagination into all the affections?"

"I can scarce answer the why," returned Cleveland; "but I think it would destroy the reality. I am rather of the old school. If I had a daughter, and asked her to get my slippers, I am afraid I should think it a little wearisome if I had, in receiving them, to make *des belles phrases* in return."

While they were thus talking, and Lady Florence continued to press her side of the question, they passed through a little grove that conducted to an arm of the stream which ornamented the grounds, and by its quiet and shadowy gloom was meant to give a contrast to the livelier features of the domain. Here they came suddenly upon Maltravers. He was walking by the side of the brook, and evidently absorbed in thought.

It was the trembling of Lady Florence's hand as it lay on

¹ "Think that of all the hearts over which you reign, there is not one in which your empire can be so well established as in mine."

Cleveland's arm that induced him to stop short in an animated commentary on Rochefoucauld's character of Cardinal de Retz, and look round.

"Ha, most meditative Jacques!" said he. "And what new moral hast thou been conning in our Forest of Ardennes?"

"Oh, I am glad to see you; I wished to consult you, Cleveland. But first, Lady Florence, to convince you and our host that my rambles have not been wholly fruitless, and that I could not walk from Dan to Beersheba and find all barren, accept my offering,—a wild rose that I discovered in the thickest part of the wood; it is not a civilized rose. Now, Cleveland, a word with you."

"And now, Mr. Maltravers, I am *de trop*," said Lady Florence.

"Pardon me, I have no secrets from you in this matter,—or rather these matters; for there are two to be discussed. In the first place, Lady Florence, that poor Cesarini: you know and like him — Nay, no blushes."

"Did I blush? Then it was in recollection of an old reproach of yours."

"At its justice? Well, no matter. He is one for whom I always felt a lively interest. His very morbidity of temperament only increases my anxiety for his future fate. I have received a letter from De Montaigne, his brother-in-law, who seems seriously uneasy about Castruccio. He wishes him to leave England at once, as the sole means of restoring his broken fortunes. De Montaigne has the opportunity of procuring him a diplomatic situation which may not again occur, and — But you know the man: what shall we do? I am sure he will not listen to me; he looks on me as an interested rival for fame."

"Do you think I have any subtler eloquence?" said Cleveland. "No, I am an author too. Come, I think your ladyship must be the arch-negotiator."

"He has genius, he has merit," said Maltravers, pleadingly; "he wants nothing but time and experience to wean him from his foibles. *Will* you try to save him, Lady Florence?"

"Why? Nay, I must not be obdurate; I will see him when

I go to town. It is like you, Mr. Maltravers, to feel this interest in one — ”

“Who does not like me, you would say; but he will some day or other. Besides, I owe him deep gratitude. In his weaker qualities I have seen many which all literary men might incur, without strict watch over themselves; and let me add, also, that his family have great claims on me.”

“You believe in the soundness of his heart and in the integrity of his honour?” said Cleveland, inquiringly.

“Indeed I do; these are, these must be, the redeeming qualities of poets.”

Maltravers spoke warmly; and such at that time was his influence over Florence that his words formed — alas, too fatally! — her estimate of Castruccio’s character, which had at first been high, but which his own presumption had latterly shaken. She had seen him three or four times in the interval between the receipt of his apologetic letter and her visit to Cleveland, and he had seemed to her rather sullen than humbled. But she felt for the vanity she herself had wounded.

“And now,” continued Maltravers, “for my second subject of consultation. But that is political: will it weary Lady Florence?”

“Oh, no; to politics I am never indifferent: they always inspire me with contempt or admiration, according to the motives of those who bring the science into action. Pray say on.”

“Well,” said Cleveland, “one confidant at a time. You will forgive me, for I see my guests coming across the lawn, and I may as well make a diversion in your favour. Ernest can consult *me* at any time.”

Cleveland walked away; but the intimacy between Maltravers and Florence was of so frank a nature that there was nothing embarrassing in the thought of a *tête-à-tête*.

“Lady Florence,” said Ernest, “there is no one in the world with whom I can confer so cheerfully as with you. I am almost glad of Cleveland’s absence, for, with all his amiable and fine qualities, ‘the world is too much with’ him, and we do not argue from the same data. Pardon my prelude;

now to my position. I have received a letter from Mr. ——. That statesman, whom none but those acquainted with the chivalrous beauty of his nature can understand or appreciate, sees before him the most brilliant career that ever opened in this country to a public man not born an aristocrat. He has asked me to form one of the new Administration that he is about to create; the place offered to me is above my merits, nor suited to what I have yet done, though perhaps it be suited to what I may yet do. I make that qualification, for you know," added Ernest, with a proud smile, "that I am sanguine and self-confident."

"You accept the proposal?"

"Nay,— should I not reject it? Our politics are the same only for the moment, our ultimate objects are widely different. To serve with Mr. —, I must make an unequal compromise,—abandon nine opinions to promote one. Is not this a capitulation of that great citadel, one's own conscience? No man will call me inconsistent, for in public life to agree with another on a party question is all that is required; the thousand questions not yet ripened, and lying dark and concealed in the future, are not inquired into and divined; but I own I shall deem myself worse than inconsistent. For this is my dilemma: if I use this noble spirit merely to advance one object, and then desert him where he halts, I am treacherous to him; if I halt with him, but one of my objects effected, I am treacherous to myself. Such are my views. It is with pain I arrive at them, for, at first, my heart beat with a selfish ambition."

"You are right, you are right," exclaimed Florence, with glowing cheeks: "how could I doubt you? I comprehend the sacrifice you make; for a proud thing is it to soar above the predictions of foes in that palpable road to honour which the world's hard eyes can see, and the world's cold heart can measure; but prouder is it to feel that you have never advanced one step to the goal which remembrance would retract. No, my friend, wait your time, confident that it must come, when conscience and ambition can go hand in hand, when the broad objects of a luminous and enlarged policy lie before you

like a chart, and you can calculate every step of the way without peril of being lost. Ah, let them still call loftiness of purpose and whiteness of soul the dreams of a theorist,—even if they be so, the Ideal in this case is better than the Practical. Meanwhile your position is not one to forfeit lightly. Before you is that throne in literature which it requires no doubtful step to win, if you have, as I believe, the mental power to attain it,—an ambition that may indeed be relinquished, if a more troubled career can better achieve those public purposes at which both letters and policy should aim, but which is not to be surrendered for the rewards of a placeman, or the advancement of a courtier.”

It was while uttering these noble and inspiring sentiments that Florence Lascelles suddenly acquired in Ernest’s eyes a loveliness with which they had not before invested her.

“Oh,” he said, as with a sudden impulse he lifted her hand to his lips, “blessed be the hour in which you gave me your friendship! These are the thoughts I have longed to hear from living lips when I have been tempted to believe patriotism a delusion, and virtue but a name.”

Lady Florence heard, and her whole form seemed changed; she was no longer the majestic sibyl, but the attached, timorous, delighted woman.

It so happened that in her confusion she dropped from her hand the flower Maltravers had given her; and involuntarily glad of a pretext to conceal her countenance, she stooped to take it from the ground. In so doing, a letter fell from her bosom; and Maltravers, as he bent forwards to forestall her own movement, saw that the direction was to himself, and in the handwriting of his unknown correspondent. He seized the letter and gazed in flattered and entranced astonishment, first on the writing, next on the detected writer. Florence grew deadly pale, and covering her face with her hands, burst into tears.

“Oh, fool that I was,” cried Ernest, in the passion of the moment, “not to know, not to have felt, that there were not two Florences in the world! But if the thought had crossed me, I would not have dared to harbour it.”

"Go, go," sobbed Florence; "leave me, in mercy leave me!"

"Not till you bid me rise," said Ernest, in emotion scarcely less deep than hers, as he sank on his knee at her feet.

Need I go on? When they left that spot, a soft confession had been made, deep vows interchanged, and Ernest Maltravers was the accepted suitor of Florence Lascelles.

CHAPTER III.

A HUNDRED fathers would in my situation tell you that as you are of noble extraction, you should marry a nobleman. But I do not say so. I will not sacrifice my child to any prejudice. — KOTZEBUE: *Lover's Vows*.

Take heed, my lord; the welfare of us all
Hangs on the cutting short that fraudulent man.

SHAKSPEARE: *Henry VI*.

Oh, how this spring of love resembleth
Th' uncertain glory of an April day,
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And by and by a cloud takes all away!

SHAKSPEARE: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

WHEN Maltravers was once more in his solitary apartment, he felt as in a dream. He had obeyed an impulse,—irresistible, perhaps, but one with which the *conscience of his heart* was not satisfied. A voice whispered to him: "Thou hast deceived her and thyself; thou dost not love her!" In vain he recalled her beauty, her grace, her genius, her singular and enthusiastic passion for himself; the voice still replied: "Thou dost not love. Bid farewell forever to thy fond dreams of a life more blessed than that of mortals. From the stormy sea of the future are blotted out eternally for thee Calypso and her Golden Isle. Thou canst no more paint on the dim canvas of thy desires the form of her with whom thou

couldst dwell forever. Thou hast been unfaithful to thine own ideal; thou hast given thyself forever and forever to another; thou hast renounced hope; thou must live as in a prison, with a being with whom thou hast not the harmony of love."

"No matter," said Maltravers, almost alarmed, and starting from these thoughts, "I am betrothed to one who loves me; it is folly and dishonour to repent and to repine. I have gone through the best years of youth without finding the Egeria with whom the cavern would be sweeter than a throne. Why live to the grave a vain and visionary nympholept? Out of the real world could I have made a nobler choice?"

While Maltravers thus communed with himself, Lady Florence passed into her father's dressing-room, and there awaited his return from London. She knew his worldly views; she knew also the pride of her affianced, and she felt that she alone could mediate between the two.

Lord Saxingham at last returned,—busy, bustling, important, and good humoured as usual. "Well, Flory, well? Glad to see you! Quite blooming, I declare,—never saw you with such a colour. Monstrous like me, certainly. We always had fine complexions and fine eyes in our family. But I'm rather late,—first bell rung; we *ci-devant jeunes hommes* are rather long dressing, and you are not dressed yet, I see."

"My dearest Father, I wished to speak with you on a matter of much importance."

"Do you? What, immediately?"

"Yes."

"Well, what is it? Your Slingsby property, I suppose."

"No, my dear Father; pray sit down and hear me patiently."

Lord Saxingham began to be both alarmed and curious; he seated himself in silence, and looked anxiously in the face of his daughter.

"You have always been very indulgent to me," commenced Florence, with a half smile, "and I have had my own way more than most young ladies. Believe me, my dear Father, I am most grateful, not only for your affection, but your es-

teem. I have been a strange, wild girl, but I am now about to reform; and as the first step, I ask your consent to give myself a preceptor and a guide — ”

“A what?” cried Lord Saxingham.

“In other words, I am about to — to — Well, the truth must out, — to marry.”

“Has the Duke of —— been here to-day?”

“Not that I know of. But it is no duke to whom I have promised my hand, — it is a nobler and rarer dignity that has caught my ambition. Mr. Maltravers has — ”

“Mr. Maltravers! Mr. Devil! The girl’s mad! Don’t talk to me, child; I won’t consent to any such nonsense. A country gentleman, very respectable, very clever, and all that; but it’s no use talking, — my mind’s made up. With your fortune, too!”

“My dear Father, I will not marry without your consent, though my fortune is settled on me, and I am of age.”

“There’s a good child; and now let me dress, — we shall be late.”

“No, not yet,” said Lady Florence, throwing her arm carelessly round her father’s neck. “I shall marry Mr. Maltravers, but it will be with your full approval. Just consider, if I married the Duke of ——, he would expect all my fortune, such as it is. Ten thousand a year is at my disposal; if I marry Mr. Maltravers, it will be settled on you. I always meant it, — it is a poor return for your kindness, your indulgence; but it will show that your own Flory is not ungrateful.”

“I won’t hear.”

“Stop! listen to reason. You are not rich, you are entitled but to a small pension if you ever resign office, and your official salary, I have often heard you say, does not prevent you from being embarrassed. To whom should a daughter give from her superfluities but to a parent; from whom should a parent receive, but from a child, who can never repay his love? Ah, this is nothing; but you — you who have never crossed her lightest whim — do not you destroy all the hopes of happiness your Florence can ever form.”

Florence wept, and Lord Saxingham, who was greatly moved, let fall a few tears also. Perhaps it is too much to say that the pecuniary part of the proffered arrangement entirely won him over; but still the way it was introduced softened his heart. He possibly thought that it was better to have a good and grateful daughter in a country gentleman's wife than a sullen and thankless one in a duchess. However that may be, certain it is that before Lord Saxingham began his toilet he promised to make no obstacle to the marriage, and all he asked in return was that at least three months (but that, indeed, the lawyers would require) should elapse before it took place; and on this understanding Florence left him, radiant and joyous as Flora herself when the sun of spring makes the world a garden. Never had she thought so little of her beauty, and never had it seemed so glorious, as that happy evening. But Maltravers was pale and thoughtful, and Florence in vain sought his eyes during the dinner, which seemed to her insufferably long. Afterwards, however, they met and conversed apart 'the rest of the evening, and the beauty of Florence began to produce upon Ernest's heart its natural effect; and that evening—ah, how Florence treasured the remembrance of every hour, every minute of its annals!

It would have been amusing to witness the short conversation between Lord Saxingham and Maltravers when the latter sought the earl at night in his lordship's room. To Lord Saxingham's surprise, not a word did Maltravers utter of his own subordinate pretensions to Lady Florence's hand. Coldly, dryly, and almost haughtily, did he make the formal proposals, "as if [as Lord Saxingham afterwards said to Ferrers] the man were doing me the highest possible honour in taking my daughter, the beauty of London, with fifty thousand a year, off my hands." But this was quite Maltravers! If he had been proposing to the daughter of a country curate without a sixpence, he would have been the humblest of the humble. The earl was embarrassed and discomposd; he was almost awed by the Siddons-like countenance and Coriolanus-like air of his future son-in-law; he even hinted nothing of

the compromise as to time which he had made with his daughter; he thought it better to leave it to Lady Florence to arrange that matter. They shook hands frigidly and parted. Maltravers went next into Cleveland's room, and communicated all to the delighted old man, whose congratulations were so fervid that Maltravers felt it would be a sin not to fancy himself the happiest man in the world. That night he wrote his refusal of the appointment offered him.

The next day Lord Saxingham went to his office in Downing Street as usual, and Lady Florence and Ernest found an opportunity to ramble through the grounds alone.

There it was that occurred those confessions, sweet alike to utter and to hear. Then did Florence speak of her early years, of her self-formed and solitary mind, of her youthful dreams and reveries. Nothing around her to excite interest or admiration, or the more romantic, the higher, or the softer qualities of her nature, she turned to contemplation and to books. It is the combination of the faculties with the affections, exiled from action, and finding no worldly vent, which produces Poetry, the child of passion and of thought. Hence, before the real cares of existence claim them, the young who are abler yet lonelier than their fellows, are nearly always poets; and Florence was a poetess. In minds like this, the first book that seems to embody and represent their own most cherished and beloved trains of sentiment and ideas, ever creates a reverential and deep enthusiasm. The lonely and proud and melancholy soul of Maltravers, which made itself visible in all his creations, became to Florence like a revealer of the secrets of her own nature. She conceived an intense and mysterious interest in the man whose mind exercised so pervading a power over her own. She made herself acquainted with his pursuits, his career; she fancied she found a symmetry and harmony between the actual being and the breathing genius; she imagined she understood what seemed dark and obscure to others. He whom she had never seen, grew to her a never-absent friend. His ambition, his reputation, were to her like a possession of her own. So at length, in the folly of her young romance, she wrote to him;

and dreaming of no discovery, anticipating no result, the habit, once indulged, became to her that luxury which writing for the eye of the world is to an author oppressed with the burden of his own thoughts. At length she saw him, and he did not destroy her illusion. She might have recovered from the spell if she had found him ready at once to worship at her shrine. The mixture of reserve and frankness — frankness of language, reserve of manner — which belonged to Maltravers, piqued her. Her vanity became the auxiliary to her imagination. At length they met at Cleveland's house; their intercourse became more unrestrained, their friendship was established, and she discovered that she had wilfully implicated her happiness in indulging her dreams. Yet even then she believed that Maltravers loved her, despite his silence upon the subject of love. His manner, his words, bespoke his interest in her, and his voice was ever soft when he spoke to women; for he had much of the old chivalric respect and tenderness for the sex. What was general it was natural that she should apply individually, — she who had walked the world but to fascinate and to conquer. It was probable that her great wealth and social position imposed a check on the delicate pride of Maltravers, — she hoped so, she believed it; yet she felt her danger, and her own pride at last took alarm. In such a moment she had resumed the character of the unknown correspondent; she had written to Maltravers, — addressed her letter to his own house, and meant the next day to have gone to London and posted it there. In this letter she had spoken of his visit to Cleveland, of his position with herself. She exhorted him, if he loved her, to confess, and if not, to fly. She had written artfully and eloquently; she was desirous of expediting her own fate; and then, with that letter in her bosom, she had met Maltravers, and the reader has learned the rest. Something of all this the blushing and happy Florence now revealed; and when she ended with uttering the woman's soft fear that she had been too bold, is it wonderful that Maltravers, clasping her to his bosom, felt the gratitude and the delighted vanity which seemed even to himself like love?

And into love those feelings rapidly and deliciously will merge, if fate and accident permit!

And now they were by the side of the water, and the sun was gently setting, as on the eve before. It was about the same hour,—the fairest of an autumn day; none were near,—the slope of the hill hid the house from their view. Had they been in the desert they could not have been more alone. It was not silence that breathed around them as they sat on that bench, with the broad beech spreading over them its trembling canopy of leaves, but those murmurs of living nature which are sweeter than silence itself,—the songs of birds; the tinkling bell of the sheep on the opposite bank; the wind sighing through the trees; and the gentle heaving of the glittering waves that washed the odorous reed and water-lily at their feet. They had both been for some moments silent, and Florence now broke the pause, but in tones more low than usual.

“Ah,” said she, turning towards him, “these hours are happier than we can find in that crowded world whither your destiny must call us. For me, ambition seems forever at an end. I have found all; I am no longer haunted with the desire of gaining a vague something,—a shadowy empire that we call fame or power. The sole thought that disturbs the calm current of my soul is the fear to lose a particle of the rich possession I have gained.”

“May your fears ever be as idle!”

“And you really love me! I repeat to myself ever and ever that one phrase. I could once have borne to lose you; now it would be my death. I despaired of ever being loved for myself: my wealth was a fatal dower; I suspected avarice in every vow, and saw the base world lurk at the bottom of every heart that offered itself at my shrine. But you, Ernest, you, I feel, never could weigh gold in the balance, and you, if you love, love me for myself.”

“And I shall love thee more with every hour.”

“I know not that; I dread that you will love me less when you know me more. I fear I shall seem to you exacting, — I am jealous already. I was jealous even of Lady T—— when

I saw you by her side this morning. I would have your every look, monopolize your every word."

This confession did not please Maltravers as it might have done if he had been more deeply in love. Jealousy in a woman of so vehement and imperious a nature was indeed a passion to be dreaded.

"Do not say so, dear Florence," said he, with a very grave smile; "for love should have implicit confidence as its bond and nature,—and jealousy is doubt, and doubt is the death of love."

A shade passed over Florence's too expressive face, and she sighed heavily.

It was at this time that Maltravers, raising his eyes, saw the form of Lumley Ferrers approaching towards them from the opposite end of the terrace. At the same instant a dark cloud crept over the sky, the waters seemed overcast, and the breeze fell; a chill and strange presentiment of evil shot across Ernest's heart, and like many imaginative persons, he was unconsciously superstitious as to presentiments.

"We are no longer alone," said he, rising; "your cousin has doubtless learned our engagement, and comes to congratulate your suitor.

"Tell me," he continued musingly, as they walked on to meet Ferrers, "are you very partial to Lumley? What think you of his character? It is one that perplexes me: sometimes I think it has changed since we parted in Italy; sometimes I think it has not changed, but ripened."

"Lumley I have known from a child," replied Florence, "and see much to admire and like in him. I admire his boldness and candour, his scorn of the world's littleness and falsehood; I like his good-nature, his gayety, and fancy his heart better than it may seem to the superficial observer."

"Yet he appears to me selfish and unprincipled."

"It is from a fine contempt for the vices and follies of men that he has contracted the habit of consulting his own resolute will; and believing everything done in this noisy stage of action a cheat, he has accommodated his ambition to the fashion. Though without what is termed 'genius,' he will

obtain a distinction and power that few men of genius arrive at."

"Because *genius* is essentially honest," said Maltravers. "However, you teach me to look on him more indulgently. I suspect the real frankness of men whom I know to be hypocrites in public life; but perhaps I judge by too harsh a standard."

"Third persons," said Ferrers, as he now joined them, "are seldom unwelcome in the country; and I flatter myself that I am the exact thing wanting to complete the charm of this beautiful landscape."

"You are ever modest, my cousin."

"It is my weak side, I know; but I shall improve with years and wisdom. What say you, Maltravers?" and Ferrers passed his arm affectionately through Ernest's. "By the by, I am too familiar,—I am sunk in the world; I am a thing to be sneered at by you old-family people. I am next heir to a brand-new Brummagem peerage. Gad, I feel brassy already!"

"What, is Mr. Templeton — ?"

"Mr. Templeton is no more,—he is defunct, extinguished; out of the ashes rises the phoenix Lord Vargrave. We had thought of a more sounding title: De Courval has a nobler sound; but my good uncle has nothing of the Norman about him, so we dropped the De as ridiculous. Vargrave is euphonious and appropriate. My uncle has a manor of that name,—Baron Vargrave of Vargrave."

"Ah, I congratulate you!"

"Thank you. Lady Vargrave may destroy all my hopes yet. But nothing venture, nothing have. My uncle will be gazetted to-day. Poor man, he will be delighted; and as he certainly owes it much to me, he will, I suppose, be very grateful,—or hate me ever afterwards; that is a toss up. A benefit conferred is a complete hazard between the thumb of pride and the forefinger of affection. Heads gratitude, tails hatred! There, that's a simile in the fashion of the old writers; 'Well of English undefiled!' humph!"

"So that beautiful child is Mrs. Templeton's, or rather

Lady Vargrave's, daughter by a former marriage?" said Maltravers, abstractedly.

"Yes, it is astonishing how fond he is of her. Pretty little creature,—confoundedly artful, though. By the way, Maltravers, we had an unexpectedly stormy night the last of the session,—strong division; ministers hard pressed. I made quite a good speech for them. I suppose, however, there will be some change,—the moderates will be taken in. Perhaps by next session I may congratulate you."

Ferrers looked hard at Maltravers while he spoke; but Ernest replied coldly and evasively, and they were now joined by a party of idlers lounging along the lawn in expectation of the first dinner-bell. Cleveland was in high consultation about the proper spot for a new fountain; and he summoned Maltravers to give his opinion whether it should spring from the centre of a flower-bed, or beneath the drooping shade of a large willow. While this interesting discussion was going on, Ferrers drew aside his cousin, and pressing her hand affectionately, said, in a soft and tender voice,—

"My dear Florence—for in such a time permit me to be familiar—I understand from Lord Saxingham, whom I met in London, that you are engaged to Maltravers. Busy as I was, I could not rest without coming hither to offer my best and most earnest wish for your happiness. I may seem a careless, I am considered a selfish person; but my heart is warm to those who really interest it. And never did brother offer up for the welfare of a beloved sister prayers more anxious and fond than those that poor Lumley Ferrers breathes for Florence Lascelles."

Florence was startled and melted, the whole tone and manner of Lumley were so different from those he usually assumed. She warmly returned the pressure of his hand, and thanked him briefly, but with emotion.

"No one is great and good enough for you, Florence," continued Ferrers,— "no one. But I admire your disinterested and generous choice. Maltravers and I have not been friends lately; but I respect him, as all must. He has noble qualities and he has great ambition. In addition to the deep and

ardent love that you cannot fail to inspire, he will owe you eternal gratitude. In this aristocratic country, your hand secures to him the most brilliant fortunes, the most proud career. His talents will now be measured by a very different standard. His merits will not pass through any subordinate grades, but leap at once into the highest posts; and as he is even more proud than ambitious, how he must bless one who raises him, without effort, into positions of eminent command!"

"Oh, he does not think of such worldly advantages,—he, the too pure, the too refined!" said Florence, with trembling eagerness. "He has no avarice, nothing mercenary in his nature."

"No, there you indeed do him justice,—there is not a particle of baseness in his mind; I did not say there was. The very greatness of his aspirations, his indignant and scornful pride, lift him above the thought of your wealth, your rank,—except as means to an end."

"You mistake still," said Florence, faintly smiling, but turning pale.

"No," resumed Ferrers, not appearing to hear her, and as if pursuing his own thoughts. "I always predicted that Maltravers would make a distinguished connection in marriage. He would not permit himself to love the low-born or the poor. His affections are in his pride as much as in his heart. He is a great creature; you have judged wisely, and may Heaven bless you!"

With these words Ferrers left her, and Florence, when she descended to dinner, wore a moody and clouded brow. Ferrers stayed three days at the house. He was peculiarly cordial to Maltravers, and spoke little to Florence. But that little never failed to leave upon her mind a jealous and anxious irritability, to which she yielded with morbid facility. In order perfectly to understand Florence Lascelles, it must be remembered that, with all her dazzling qualities, she was not what is called a lovable person. A certain hardness in her disposition, even as a child, had prevented her winding into the hearts of those around her. Deprived of her mother's

care, having little or no intercourse with children of her own age, brought up with a starched governess or female relations, poor and proud, she never had contracted the softness of manner which the reciprocation of household affections usually produces. With a haughty consciousness of her powers, her birth, her position, advantages always dinned into her ear, she grew up solitary, unsocial, and imperious. Her father was rather proud than fond of her; her servants did not love her,—she had too little consideration for others, too little blandness and suavity, to be loved by inferiors; she was too learned and too stern to find pleasure in the conversation and society of young ladies of her own age: she had no friends. Now, having really strong affections, she felt all this, but rather with resentment than grief. She longed to be loved, but did not *seek* to be so; she felt as if it was her fate not to be loved,—she blamed Fate, not herself.

When, with all the proud, pure, and generous candour of her nature, she avowed to Ernest her love for him, she naturally expected the most ardent and passionate return; nothing less could content her. But the habit and experience of all the past made her eternally suspicious that she was not loved; it was wormwood and poison to her to fancy that Maltravers had ever considered her advantages of fortune, except as a bar to his pretensions and a check on his passion. It was the same thing to her whether it was the pettiest avarice or the loftiest aspirations that actuated her lover, if he *had been* actuated in his heart by any sentiment *but* love; and Ferrers, to whose eye her foibles were familiar, knew well how to make his praises of Ernest arouse against Ernest all her exacting jealousies and irritable doubts.

"It is strange," said he, one evening, as he was conversing with Florence, "how complete and triumphant a conquest you have effected over Ernest! Will you believe it? He conceived a prejudice against you when he first saw you,—he even said that you were made to be admired, not to be loved."

"Ha! Did he so? True, true; he has almost said the same thing to me."

"But now how he must love you! Surely he has all the signs."

"And what are the signs, most learned Lumley?" said Florence, forcing a smile.

"Why, in the first place, you will doubtless observe that he never takes his eyes from you; with whomsoever he converses, whatever his occupation, those eyes, restless and pinning, wander around for one glance from you."

Florence sighed and looked up: at the other end of the room her lover was conversing with Cleveland, and his eyes never wandered in search of her.

Ferrers did not seem to notice this practical contradiction of his theory, but went on,—

"Then surely his whole character is changed,—that brow has lost its calm majesty, that deep voice its assured and tranquil tone. Has he not become humble and embarrassed and fretful, living only on your smile, reproachful if you look upon another, sorrowful if your lip be less smiling,—a thing of doubt and dread and trembling agitation; slave to a shadow; no longer lord of the creation? Such is love,—such is the love you should inspire, such is the love Maltravers is capable of; for I have seen him testify it to another. But," added Lumley, quickly, and as if afraid he had said too much, "Lord Saxingham is looking out for me to make up his whist-table. I go to-morrow. When shall you be in town?"

"In the course of the week," said poor Florence, mechanically; and Lumley walked away.

In another moment, Maltravers, who had been more observant than he seemed, joined her where she sat.

"Dear Florence," said he, tenderly, "you look pale; I fear you are not so well this evening."

"No affectation of an interest you do not feel, pray," said Florence, with a scornful lip but swimming eyes.

"Do not feel, Florence!"

"It is the first time, at least, that you have observed whether I am well or ill. But it is no matter."

"My dear Florence, why this tone? How have I offended you? Has Lumley said —"

"Nothing but in your praise. Oh, be not afraid; you are one of those of whom all speak highly. But do not let me detain you here; let us join our host,—you have left him alone."

Lady Florence waited for no reply, nor did Maltravers attempt to detain her. He looked pained, and when she turned round to catch a glance that she hoped would be reproachful, he was gone. Lady Florence became nervous and uneasy, talked she knew not what, and laughed hysterically; she however deceived Cleveland into the notion that she was in the best possible spirits. By and by she rose, and passed through the suite of rooms; her heart was with Maltravers,—still, he was not visible. At length she entered the conservatory, and there she observed him, through the open casements, walking slowly, with folded arms, upon the moonlit lawn. There was a short struggle in her breast between woman's pride and woman's love; the last conquered, and she joined him.

"Forgive me, Ernest," she said, extending her hand; "I was to blame."

Ernest kissed the fair hand, and answered touchingly,—

"Florence, you have the power to wound me,—be forbearing in its exercise. Heaven knows that I would not, from the vain desire of showing command over you, inflict upon you a single pang. Ah, do not fancy that in lovers' quarrels there is any sweetness that compensates the sting."

"I told you I was too exacting, Ernest. I told you you would not love me so well when you knew me better."

"And were a false prophetess. Florence, every day, every hour I love you more,—better than I once thought I could."

"Then," cried this wayward girl, anxious to pain herself, "then once you did not love me?"

"Florence, I will be candid,—I did not. You are now rapidly obtaining an empire over me greater than my reason should allow. But beware; if my love be really a possession you desire, beware how you arm my reason against you. Florence, I am a proud man. My very consciousness of the more splendid alliances you could form renders me less hum-

ble a lover than you might find in others. I were not worthy of you if I were not tenacious of my self-respect."

"Ah!" said Florence, to whose heart these words went home, "forgive me but this once: I shall not forgive myself so soon."

And Ernest drew her to his heart, and felt that, with all her faults, a woman whom he feared he could not render as happy as her sacrifices to him deserved was becoming very dear to him. In his heart he knew that she was not formed to render *him* happy; but that was not his thought, his fear. Her love had rooted out all thought of self from that generous breast; his only anxiety was to requite *her*.

They walked along the sward silent, thoughtful; and Florence melancholy, yet blessed.

"That serene heaven, those lovely stars," said Maltravers at last, "do they not preach to us the Philosophy of Peace? Do they not tell us how much of calm belongs to the dignity of man and the sublime essence of the soul? Petty distractions and self-wrought cares are not congenial to our real nature; their very disturbance is a proof that they are at war with our natures. Ah, sweet Florence, let us learn from yon skies, over which, in the faith of the poets of old, brooded the wings of primeval and serenest Love, what earthly love should be, — a thing pure as light, and peaceful as immortality, watching over the stormy world that it shall survive, and high above the clouds and vapours that roll below. Let little minds introduce into the holiest of affections all the bitterness and tumult of common life! Let *us* love as beings who will one day be inhabitants of the stars!"

CHAPTER IV.

A SLIPPERY and subtle knave; a finder out of occasions, that has an eye can stamp and counterfeit advantages. — *Othello*.

Knavery's plain face is never seen till used. — *Othello*.

"You see, my dear Lumley," said Lord Saxingham, as the next day the two kinsmen were on their way to London in the earl's chariot,— "you see that at the best this marriage of Flory's is a cursed bore."

"Why, indeed, it has its disadvantages. Maltravers is a gentleman and a man of genius; but gentlemen are plentiful, and his genius only tells against us, since he is not even of our politics."

"Exactly; my own son-in-law voting against me!"

"A practicable, reasonable man would change,—not so Maltravers; and all the estates and all the parliamentary influence and all the wealth that ought to go with the family and with the party go out of the family and against the party. You are quite right, my dear lord, it is a cursed bore."

"And she might have had the Duke of —, — a man with a rental of a hundred thousand pounds a year. It is too ridiculous. This Maltravers,—d—d disagreeable fellow too, eh?"

"Stiff and stately; much changed for the worse of late years,—grown conceited and set up."

"Do you know, Lumley, I would rather, of the two, have had you for my son-in-law!"

Lumley half started. "Are you serious, my lord? I have not Ernest's fortune, I cannot make such settlements; my lineage, too, at least on my mother's side, is less ancient."

"Oh, as to settlements, Flory's fortune ought to be settled on herself; and as compared with that fortune, what could Mr. Maltravers pretend to settle? Neither she nor any chil-

dren she may have could want his four thousand pounds a year, if he settled it all. As for family, connections tell more nowadays than Norman descent; and for the rest, you are likely to be old Templeton's heir, to have a peerage (a large sum of ready money is always useful), are rising in the House, one of our own set, will soon be in office, and, flattery apart, a devilish good fellow into the bargain. Oh, I would sooner a thousand times that Flory had taken a fancy to you."

Lumley Ferrers bowed his head, but said nothing. He fell into a reverie; and Lord Saxingham took up his official red box, became deep in its contents, and forgot all about the marriage of his daughter.

Lumley pulled the check-string as the carriage entered Pali Mall, and desired to be set down at "The Travellers." While Lord Saxingham was borne on to settle the affairs of the nation, not being able to settle those of his own household, Ferrers was inquiring the address of Castruccio Cesarini. The porter was unable to give it him. The signor generally called every day for his notes, but no one at the club knew where he lodged. Ferrers wrote and left with the porter a line requesting Cesarini to call on him as soon as possible, and he bent his way to his house in Great George Street. He went straight into his library, unlocked his *escritoire*, and took out that letter which, the reader will remember, Maltravers had written to Cesarini, and which Lumley had secured; carefully did he twice read over this effusion, and the second time his face brightened and his eyes sparkled. It is now time to lay this letter before the reader; it ran thus: —

Private and Confidential.

MY DEAR CESARINI, — The assurance of your friendly feelings is most welcome to me. In much of what you say of marriage, I am inclined, though with reluctance, to agree. As to Lady Florence herself, few persons are more calculated to dazzle, perhaps to fascinate. But is she a person to make a home happy, to sympathize where she has been accustomed to command, to comprehend and to yield to the waywardness and irritability common to our fanciful and morbid race, to content herself with the homage of a single heart? I do not know her enough

to decide the question; but I know her enough to feel deep solicitude and anxiety for your happiness, if centred in a nature so imperious and so vain. But you will remind me of her fortune, her station. You will say that such are the sources from which, to an ambitious mind, happiness may well be drawn. Alas! I fear that the man who marries Lady Florence must indeed confine his dreams of felicity to those harsh and disappointing realities. But, Cesarini, these are not words which, were we more intimate, I would address to you. I doubt the reality of those affections which you ascribe to her, and suppose devoted to yourself. She is evidently fond of conquest. She sports with the victims she makes. Her vanity dupes others, — perhaps to be duped itself at last. I will not say more to you.

Yours,

E. MALTRAVERS.

“Hurrah!” cried Ferrers, as he threw down the letter, and rubbed his hands with delight. “I little thought, when I schemed for this letter, that chance would make it so inestimably serviceable. There is less to alter than I thought for; the clumsiest botcher in the world could manage it. Let me look again. Hem! hem! The first phrase to alter is this:

I know her enough to feel deep solicitude and anxiety for *your* happiness if centred in a nature so imperious and vain,’ — scratch out ‘*your*,’ and put ‘*my*.’ All the rest good, good, till we come to ‘affections which you ascribe to her, and suppose devoted to *yourself*,’ — for ‘*yourself*’ write ‘*myself*;’ the rest will do. Now, then, the date: we must change it to the present month, and the work is done. I wish that Italian blockhead would come. If I can but once make an irreparable breach between her and Maltravers, I think I cannot fail of securing his place; her pique, her resentment, will hurry her into taking the first who offers, by way of revenge. And by Jupiter, even if I fail (which I am sure I shall not), it will be something to keep Flory as lady paramount for a duke of our own party. I shall gain immensely by such a connection; but I lose everything and gain nothing by her marrying Maltravers, — of opposite politics too, — whom I begin to hate like poison. But no duke shall have her. Florence Ferrers, — the only alliteration I ever liked; yet it would sound rough in poetry.”

Lumley then deliberately drew towards him his inkstand,

"No penknife! Ah, true, I never mend pens,—sad waste; must send out for one." He rang the bell, ordered a penknife to be purchased, and the servant was still out when a knock at the door was heard, and in a minute more Cesarini entered.

"Ah," said Lumley, assuming a melancholy air, "I am glad that you are arrived; you will excuse my having written to you so unceremoniously. You received my note. Sit down, pray. And how are you? You look delicate. Can I offer you anything?"

"Wine," said Cesarini, laconically, "wine; your climate requires wine."

Here the servant entered with the penknife, and was ordered to bring wine and sandwiches. Lumley then conversed lightly on different matters till the wine appeared; he was rather surprised to observe Cesarini pour out and drink off glass upon glass, with an evident craving for the excitement. When he had satisfied himself, he turned his dark eyes to Ferrers, and said, "You have news to communicate; I see it in your brow. I am now ready to hear all."

"Well, then, listen to me. You were right in your suspicions; jealousy is ever a true diviner. I make no doubt Othello was quite right, and Desdemona was no better than she should be. Maltravers has proposed to my cousin, and been accepted."

Cesarini's complexion grew perfectly ghastly; his whole frame shook like a leaf; for a moment he seemed paralyzed.

"Curse him!" said he at last, drawing a deep breath, and betwixt his grinded teeth,— "curse him from the depths of the heart he has broken!"

"And after such a letter to you! Do you remember it? Here it is. He warns you against Lady Florence, and then secures her to himself. Is this treachery?"

"Treachery black as hell! I am an Italian," cried Cesarini, springing to his feet, and with all the passions of his climate in his face, "and I will be avenged! Bankrupt in fortune, ruined in hopes, blasted in heart, I have still the godlike consolation of the desperate,— I have revenge."

"Will you call him out?" asked Lumley, musingly and calmly. "Are you a dead shot? If so, it is worth thinking about; if not, it is a mockery: your shot misses, his goes in the air, seconds interpose, and you both walk away devilish glad to get off so well. Duels are humbugs."

"Mr. Ferrers," said Cesarini, fiercely, "this is not a matter of jest."

"I do not make it a jest; and what is more, Cesarini," said Ferrers, with a concentrated energy far more commanding than the Italian's fury, "what is more, I so detest Maltravers, I am so stung by his cold superiority, so wroth with his success, so loathe the thought of his alliance, that I would cut off this hand to frustrate that marriage! I do not jest, man, but I have method and sense in my hatred,—it is our English way."

Cesarini stared at the speaker gloomily, clenched his hand, and strode rapidly to and fro the room.

"You would be avenged, so would I. Now what shall be the means?" said Ferrers.

"I will stab him to the heart; I will —"

"Cease these tragic flights. Nay, frown and stamp not, but sit down and be reasonable, or leave me and act for yourself."

"Sir," said Cesarini, with an eye that might have alarmed a man less resolute than Ferrers, "have a care how you presume on my distress."

"You are in distress, and you refuse relief; you are bankrupt in fortune, and you rave like a poet when you should be devising and plotting for the attainment of boundless wealth. Revenge and ambition may both be yours; but they are prizes never won but by a cautious foot as well as a bold hand."

"What would you have me do? And what but his life would content me?"

"Take his life if you can,—I have no objection; go and take it. Only just observe this, that if you miss your aim, or he, being the stronger man, strike you down, you will be locked up in a madhouse for the next year or two at least;

and that is not the place in which I should like to pass the winter. But as you will."

"You, you! But what are you to me? I will go. Good-day, sir."

"Stay a moment," said Ferrers, when he saw Cesarini about to leave the room,— "stay, take this chair, and listen to me; you had better —"

Cesarini hesitated, and then, as it were, mechanically obeyed.

"Read that letter which Maltravers wrote to you. You have finished. Well, now observe: if Florence sees that letter, she will not and cannot marry the man who wrote it; you must show it to her."

"Ah, my guardian angel, I see it all! Yes, there are words in this letter no woman so proud could ever pardon. Give me it again; I will go at once."

"Pshaw! You are too quick; you have not remarked that this letter was written five months ago, before Maltravers knew much of Lady Florence. He himself has confessed to her that he did not then love her,—so much the more would she value the conquest she has now achieved. Florence would smile at this letter and say, 'Ah, he judges me differently now.'"

"Are you seeking to madden me? What do you mean? Did you not just now say that, did she see that letter, she would never marry the writer?"

"Yes, yes; but the letter must be altered. We must erase the date; we must date it from to-day,—to-day: Maltravers returns to-day. We must suppose it written, not in answer to a letter from you demanding his advice and opinion as to *your* marriage with Lady Florence, but in answer to a letter of yours in which you congratulate *him* on his approaching marriage to her. By the substitution of one pronoun for another in two places, the letter will read as well one way as another. Read it again, and see; or stop,—I will be the lecturer."

Here Ferrers read over the letter, which, by the trifling substitutions he proposed, might indeed bear the character he wished to give it.

"Does the light break in upon you now?" said Ferrera. "Are you prepared to go through a part that requires subtlety, delicacy, address, and, above all, self-control,—qualities that are the common attributes of your countrymen?"

"I will do all, fear me not. It may be villanous, it may be base; but I care not, Maltravers shall not rival, master, eclipse me in all things."

"Where are you lodging?"

"Where? Out of town a little way."

"Take up your home with me for a few days. I cannot trust you out of my sight. Send for your luggage; I have a room at your service."

Cesarini at first refused; but a man who resolves on a crime feels the awe of solitude and the necessity of a companion. He went himself to bring his effects, and promised to return to dinner.

"I must own," said Lumley, resettling himself at his desk, "this is the dirtiest trick that ever I played; but the glorious end sanctifies the paltry means. After all, it is the mere prejudice of gentlemanlike education."

A very few seconds, and with the aid of the knife to erase, and the pen to re-write, Ferrers completed his task, with the exception of the change of date, which, on second thoughts, he reserved as a matter to be regulated by circumstances.

"I think I have hit off his *m*'s and *y*'s tolerably," said he, "considering I was not brought up to this sort of thing. But the alteration would be visible on close inspection. Cesarini must read the letter to her; then, if she glances over it herself, it will be with bewildered eyes and a dizzy brain. Above all, he must not leave it with her, and must bind her to the closest secrecy. She is honourable, and will keep her word; and so now that matter is settled. I have just time before dinner to canter down to my uncle's and wish the old fellow joy."

CHAPTER V.

AND then my lord has much that he would state
All good to you. — CÉABBE : *Tales of the Heart.*

LORD VARGRAVE was sitting alone in his library, with his account-books before him. Carefully did he cast up the various sums which, invested in various speculations, swelled his income. The result seemed satisfactory, and the rich man threw down his pen with an air of triumph. "I will invest a hundred and twenty thousand pounds in land,—only a hundred and twenty thousand pounds. I will not be tempted to sink more. I will have a fine house, a house fitting for a nobleman,—a fine old Elizabethan house, a house of historical interest. I must have woods and lakes, and a deer-park above all. Deer are very gentlemanlike things, very. De Clifford's place is to be sold, I know; they ask too much for it, but ready money is tempting. I can bargain, bargain; I am a good hand at a bargain. Should I be now Lord Baron Vargrave if I had always given people what they asked? I will double my subscriptions to the Bible Society and the Philanthropic and the building of new churches. The world shall not say Richard Templeton does not deserve his greatness. I will — Come in. Who's there? Come in."

The door gently opened; the meek face of the new peeress appeared. "I disturb you; I beg your pardon — I —"

"Come in, my dear, come in; I want to talk to you; I want to talk to your ladyship. Sit down, pray."

Lady Vargrave obeyed.

"You see," said the peer, crossing his legs and caressing his left foot with both hands, while he see-sawed his stately person to and fro in his chair,— "you see that the honour conferred upon me will make a great change in our mode of life, Mrs. Temple—, I mean Lady Vargrave. This villa is all very well, my country-house is not amiss for a country

gentleman; but now we must support our rank. The landed estate I already possess will go with the title,—go to Lumley; I shall buy another at my own disposal, one that I can feel *thoroughly mine*. It shall be a splendid place, Lady Vargrave."

"This place is splendid to me," said Lady Vargrave, timidly.

"This place,—nonsense! You must learn loftier ideas, Lady Vargrave. You are young, you can easily contract new habits,—more easily, perhaps, than myself. You are naturally ladylike, though I say it; you have good taste, you don't talk much, you don't show your ignorance,—quite right. You must be presented at court, Lady Vargrave; we must give great dinners, Lady Vargrave. Balls are sinful, so is the opera,—at least I fear so; yet an opera-box would be a proper appendage to your rank, Lady Vargrave."

"My dear Mr. Templeton —"

"Lord Vargrave, if your ladyship pleases."

"I beg pardon. May you live long to enjoy your honours! But I, my dear lord,—I am not fit to share them; it is only in our quiet life that I can forget what — what I was. You terrify me when you talk of court — of —"

"Stuff, Lady Vargrave! stuff; we accustom ourselves to these things. Do I look like a man who has stood behind a counter? Rank is a glove that stretches to the hand that wears it. And the child,—dear child, dear Evelyn,—she shall be the admiration of London, the beauty, the heiress, the— Oh, she will do me honour!"

"She will, she will!" said Lady Vargrave; and the tears gushed from her eyes.

Lord Vargrave was softened.

"No mother ever deserved more from a child than you from Evelyn."

"I would hope I have done my duty," said Lady Vargrave, drying her tears.

"Papa, Papa!" cried an impatient voice, tapping at the window, "come and play, Papa; come and play at ball Papa!"

And there, by the window, stood that beautiful child, glowing with health and mirth, her light hair tossed from her forehead, her sweet mouth dimpled with smiles.

"My darling, go on the lawn; don't over-exert yourself; you have not quite recovered that horrid sprain. I will join you immediately. Bless you!"

"Don't be long, Papa,—nobody plays so nicely as you do;" and nodding and laughing from very glee, away scampered the young fairy. Lord Vargrave turned to his wife.

"What think you of my nephew,—of Lumley?" said he, abruptly.

"He seems all that is amiable, frank, and kind."

Lord Vargrave's brow became thoughtful.

"I think so too," he said, after a short pause; "and I hope you will approve of what I mean to do. You see Lumley was brought up to regard himself as my heir; I owe something to him beyond the poor estate which goes with, but never can adequately support, *my* title. Family honours, hereditary rank, must be properly regarded. But that dear girl, I shall leave her the bulk of my fortune. Could we not unite the fortune and the title? It would secure the rank to her, it would incorporate all my desires, all my duties."

"But," said Lady Vargrave, with evident surprise, "if I understand you rightly, the disparity of years —"

"And what then, what then, Lady Vargrave? Is there no disparity of years between *us*? — a greater disparity than between Lumley and that tall girl. Lumley is a mere youth, a youth still, five-and-thirty; he will be little more than forty when they marry. I was between fifty and sixty when I married you, Lady Vargrave. I don't like boy and girl marriages; a man should be older than his wife. But you are so romantic, Lady Vargrave. Besides, Lumley is so gay and good-looking, and wears so well. He has been very nearly forming another attachment; but that, I trust, is out of his head now. They must like each other. You will not gainsay me, Lady Vargrave, and if anything happens to me,—life is uncertain —"

"Oh, do not speak so, my friend, my benefactor!"

"Why, indeed," resumed his lordship, mildly, "thank Heaven, I am very well,—feel younger than ever I did; but still, life is uncertain, and if you survive me, you will not throw obstacles in the way of my grand scheme?"

"I—no—no— Of course you have the right in all things over her destiny; but so young, so soft-hearted, if she should love one of her own years —"

"Love, pooh! Love does not come into girls' heads unless it is put there. We will bring her up to love Lumley. I have another reason, a cogent one,—our secret! To him it can be confided; it should not go out of our family. Even in my grave I could not rest if a slur were cast on my respectability, my name."

Lord Vargrave spoke solemnly and warmly; then muttering to himself, "Yes, it is for the best," he took up his hat and quitted the room. He joined his stepchild on the lawn. He romped with her, he played with her,—that stiff, stately man! he laughed louder than she did, and ran almost as fast. And when she was fatigued and breathless, he made her sit down beside him in a little summer-house, and fondly stroking down her disordered tresses, said, "You tire me out, child; I am growing too old to play with you. Lumley must supply my place. You love Lumley?"

"Oh, dearly; he is so good-humoured, so kind,—he has given me such a beautiful doll, with *such* eyes!"

"You shall be his little wife. You would like to be his little wife?"

"Wife! Why, poor mamma is a wife, and she is not so happy as I am."

"Your mamma has bad health, my dear," said Lord Vargrave, a little discomposed. "But it is a fine thing to be a wife, and have a carriage of your own, and a fine house, and jewels, and plenty of money, and be your own mistress; and Lumley will love you dearly."

"Oh, yes, I should like all that."

"And you will have a protector, child, when I am no more."

The tone rather than the words of her stepfather struck a

damp into that childish heart. Evelyn lifted her eyes, gazed at him earnestly, and then, throwing her arms round him, burst into tears.

Lord Vargrave wiped his own eyes and covered her with kisses.

"Yes, you shall be Lumley's wife, — his honoured wife, heiress to my rank as to my fortunes."

"I will do all that Papa wishes."

"You will be Lady Vargrave, then, and Lumley will be your husband," said the stepfather, impressively. "Think over what I have said. Now let us join Mamma. But, as I live, here is Lumley himself! However, it is not yet the time to sound him; I hope that he has no chance with that Lady Florence."

CHAPTER VI.

FAIR encounter

Of two most rare affections. — *Tempest.*

MEANWHILE the betrothed were on their road to London. The balmy and serene beauty of the day had induced them to perform the short journey on horseback. It is somewhere said that lovers are never so handsome as in each other's company, and neither Florence nor Ernest ever looked so well as on horseback. There was something in the stateliness and grace of both, something even in the aquiline outline of their features and the haughty bend of the neck that made a sort of likeness between these young persons, although there was no comparison as to their relative degrees of personal advantage; the beauty of Florence defied all comparison. And as they rode from Cleveland's porch, where the other guests yet lingering were assembled to give the farewell greeting, there was a general conviction of the happiness destined to the affianced ones, — a general impression that both in mind and

person they were eminently suited to each other. Their position was that which is ever interesting, even in more ordinary people, and at that moment they were absolutely popular with all who gazed on them; and when the good old Cleveland turned away with tears in his eyes and murmured "Bless them!" there was not one of the party who would have hesitated to join the prayer.

Florence felt a nameless dejection as she quitted a spot so consecrated by grateful recollections.

"When shall we be again so happy?" said she, softly, as she turned back to gaze upon the landscape, which, gay with flowers and shrubs and the bright English verdure, smiled behind them like a garden.

"We will try and make my old hall and its gloomy shades remind us of these fairer scenes, my Florence."

"Ah! describe to me the character of your place. We shall live there principally, shall we not? I am sure I shall like it much better than Marsden Court, which is the name of that huge pile of arches and columns, in Vanbrugh's heaviest taste, which will soon be yours."

"I fear we shall never dispose of all your mighty retinue,—grooms of the chamber, and Patagonian footmen, and Heaven knows who besides, in the holes and corners of Burleigh," said Ernest, smiling. And then he went on to describe the old place with something of a well-born country gentleman's not displeasing pride; and Florence listened, and they planned and altered and added and improved, and laid out a map for the future. From that topic they turned to another, equally interesting to Florence. The work in which Maltravers had been engaged was completed, was in the hands of the printer, and Florence amused herself with conjectures as to the criticisms it would provoke. She was certain that all that had most pleased her would be *caviare* to the multitude. She never would believe that any one could understand Maltravers but herself. Thus time flew on till they passed that part of the road in which had occurred Ernest's adventure with Mrs. Templeton's daughter. Maltravers paused abruptly in the midst of his glowing periods as the spot awakened its asso-

ciations and reminiscences, and looked round anxiously and inquiringly. But the fair apparition was not again visible; and whatever impression the place produced, it gradually died away as they entered the suburbs of the great metropolis. Two other gentlemen and a young lady of thirty-three (I had almost forgotten them) were of the party; but they had the tact to linger a little behind during the greater part of the road, and the young lady, who was a wit and a flirt, found gossip and sentiment for both the cavaliers.

"Will you come to us this evening?" asked Florence, timidly.

"I fear I shall not be able. I have several matters to arrange before I leave town for Burleigh, which I must do next week. Three months, dearest Florence, will scarcely suffice to make Burleigh put on its best looks to greet its new mistress; and I have already appointed the great modern magicians of draperies and ormolu to consult how we may make Aladdin's palace fit for the reception of the new princess. Lawyers too! — in short, I expect to be fully occupied. But to-morrow, at three, I shall be with you, and we can ride out, if the day be fine."

"Surely," said Florence, "yonder is Signor Cesarini. How haggard and altered he appears!"

Maltravers, turning his eyes towards the spot to which Florence pointed, saw Cesarini emerging from a lane, with a porter behind him carrying some books and a trunk. The Italian, who was talking and gesticulating as to himself, did not perceive them.

"Poor Castruccio! he seems leaving his lodging," thought Maltravers. "By this time I fear he will have spent the last sum I conveyed to him. I must remember to find him out and replenish his stores.— Do not forget," said he, aloud, "to see Cesarini, and urge him to accept the appointment we spoke of."

"I will not forget it; I will see him to-morrow before we meet. Yet it is a painful task, Ernest."

"I allow it. Alas! Florence, you owe him some reparation. He undoubtedly once conceived himself entitled to

form hopes, the vanity of which his ignorance of our English world and his foreign birth prevented him from suspecting."

"Believe me, I did not give him the right to form such expectations."

"But you did not sufficiently discourage them. Ah, Florence, never underrate the pangs of hope crushed, of love contemned."

"Dreadful!" said Florence, almost shuddering. "It is strange, but my conscience never so smote me before. It is since I loved that I feel, for the first time, how guilty a creature is —"

"A coquette!" interrupted Maltravers. "Well, let us think of the past no more; but if we can restore a gifted man, whose youth promised much, to an honourable independence and a healthful mind, let us do so. Me, Cesarini never can forgive; he will think I have robbed him of you. But we men,—the woman we have once loved, even after she rejects us, ever has some power over us, and your eloquence, which has so often roused me, cannot fail to impress a nature yet more excitable."

Maltravers, on quitting Florence at her own door, went home, summoned his favourite servant, gave him Cesarini's address at Chelsea, bade him find out where he was, if he had left his lodgings, and leave at his present home, or (failing its discovery) at "The Travellers," a cover, which he made his servant address, inclosing a bank-note of some amount. If the reader wonder why Maltravers thus constituted himself the unknown benefactor of the Italian, I must tell him that he does not understand Maltravers. Cesarini was not the only man of letters whose faults he pitied, whose wants he relieved. Though his name seldom shone in the pompous list of public subscriptions, though he disdained to affect the Mæcenas and the patron, he felt the brotherhood of mankind, and a kind of gratitude for those who aspired to rise or to delight their species. An author himself, he could appreciate the vast debt which the world owes to authors, and pays but by calumny in life, and barren laurels after death. He whose profession is the Beautiful succeeds only through

the Sympathies. Charity and compassion are virtues taught with difficulty to ordinary men; to true genius they are but the instincts which direct it to the destiny it is born to fulfil, — namely, the discovery and redemption of new tracts in our common nature. Genius — the Sublime Missionary — goes forth from the serene Intellect of the Author to live in the wants, the griefs, the infirmities of others, in order that it may learn their language; and as its highest achievement is Pathos, so its most absolute requisite is Pity!

CHAPTER VII.

Don John. How canst thou cross this marriage?

Borachio. Not honestly, my lord, but so covertly that no dishonesty shall appear in me, my lord. — *Much Ado about Nothing.*

FERRERS and Cesarini were both sitting over their wine, and both had sunk into silence, for they had only one subject in common, when a note was brought to Lumley from Lady Florence. "This is lucky enough!" said he, as he read it. "Lady Florence wishes to see you, and incloses me a note for you which she asks me to address and forward to you. There it is."

Cesarini took the note with trembling hands. It was very short, and merely expressed a desire to see him the next day at two o'clock.

"What can it be?" he exclaimed. "Can she want to apologize, to explain?"

"No, no, no! Florence will not do that; but from certain words she dropped in talking with me, I guess that she has some offer to your worldly advantage to propose to you. Ha! by the way, a thought strikes me."

Lumley eagerly rang the bell. "Is Lady Florence's servant waiting for an answer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; detain him."

"Now, Cesarini, assurance is made doubly sure. Come into the next room. There, sit down at my desk, and write, as I shall dictate, to Maltravers."

"I!"

"Yes. Now *do* put yourself in my hands,— write, write. When you have finished, I will explain."

Cesarini obeyed, and the letter was as follows:—

DEAR MALTRAVERS, —I have learned your approaching marriage with Lady Florence Lascelles. Permit me to congratulate you. For myself, I have overcome a vain and foolish passion, and can contemplate your happiness without a sigh.

I have reviewed all my old prejudices against marriage, and believe it to be a state which nothing but the most perfect congeniality of temper, pursuits, and minds can render bearable. How rare is such congeniality! In your case it may exist. The affections of that beautiful being are doubtless ardent, and they are yours!

Write me a line by the bearer to assure me of your belief in my sincerity.

Yours,

C. CESARINI.

"Copy out this letter,— I want its ditto; quick. Now, seal and direct the duplicate," continued Ferrers; "that's right. Go into the hall, give it yourself to Lady Florence's servant, and beg him to take it to Seamore Place, wait for an answer, and bring it here; by which time you will have a note ready for Lady Florence. Say I will mention this to her ladyship, and give the man half-a-crown. There, begone."

"I do not understand a word of this," said Cesarini, when he returned; "will you explain?"

"Certainly; the copy of the note you have despatched to Maltravers I shall show to Lady Florence this evening as a proof of your sobered and generous feelings. Observe, it is so written that the old letter of your rival may seem an exact reply to it. To-morrow a reference to this note of yours will bring out our scheme more easily; and if you follow my instructions, you will not seem to *volunteer* showing our handiwork, as we at first intended, but rather to yield it to her eyes from a generous impulse, from an irresistible desire to save her from an unworthy husband and a wretched fate. Fortune

has been dealing our cards for us, and has turned up the ace. Three to one now on the odd trick. Maltravers, too, is at home. I called at his house, on returning from my uncle's, and learned that he would not stir out all the evening."

In due time came the answer from Ernest. It was short and hurried, but full of all the manly kindness of his nature; it expressed admiration and delight at the tone of Cesarini's letter; it revoked all former expressions derogatory to Lady Florence; it owned the harshness and error of his first impressions; it used every delicate argument that could soothe and reconcile Cesarini; and concluded by sentiments of friendship and desire of service so cordial, so honest, so free from the affectation of patronage that even Cesarini himself, half insane as he was with passion, was almost softened. Lumley saw the change in his countenance, snatched the letter from his hand, read it, threw it into the fire, and saying, "We must guard against accidents," clapped the Italian affectionately on the shoulder and added: "Now you can have no remorse; for a more Jesuitical piece of insulting, hypocritical cant I never read. Where's your note to Lady Florence? Your compliments, you will be with her at two. There, now the rehearsal's over, the scenes arranged, and I'll dress, and open the play for you with a prologue."

CHAPTER VIII.

ÆSTUAT ingens

Imo in corde pudor, mixtoque insania luctu,

*Et furiis agitatus amor, et conscia virtus.*¹ — VIRGIL.

THE next day, punctual to his appointment, Cesarini repaired to his critical interview with Lady Florence. Her countenance, which, like that of most persons whose temper is not under their command, ever too faithfully expressed

¹ "Deep in her inmost heart is stirred the immense shame, and madness with commingled grief, and love agitated by rage, and conscious virtue."

what was within, was unusually flushed. Lumley had dropped words and hints which had driven sleep from her pillow and repose from her mind.

She rose from her seat with nervous agitation as Cesarini entered and made his grave salutation. After a short and embarrassed pause, she recovered, however, her self-possession, and with all a woman's delicate and dexterous tact urged upon the Italian the expediency of accepting the offer of honourable independence now extended to him.

"You have abilities," she said, in conclusion, "you have friends, you have youth; take advantage of those gifts of nature and fortune, and fulfil such a career as," added Lady Florence, with a smile, "Dante did not consider incompatible with poetry."

"I cannot object to any career," said Cesarini, with an effort, "that may serve to remove me from a country that has no longer any charms for me. I thank you for your kindness; I will obey you. May you be happy! And yet—no, ah! no—happy you must be! Even *he*, sooner or later, must see you with my eyes."

"I know," replied Florence, falteringly, "that you have wisely and generously mastered a past illusion. Mr. Ferrers allowed me to see the letter you wrote to Er—to Mr. Maltravers; it was worthy of you; it touched me deeply. But I trust you will outlive your prejudices against —"

"Stay," interrupted Cesarini; "did Ferrers communicate to you the answer to that letter?"

"No, indeed."

"I am glad of it."

"Why?"

"Oh, no matter. Heaven bless you! Farewell."

"No, I implore you, do not go yet. What was there in that letter that it could pain me to see? Lumley hinted darkly, but would not speak out; be more frank."

"I cannot; it would be treachery to Maltravers, cruelty to you. Yet would it be cruel?"

"No, it would not; it would be kindness and mercy. Show me the letter,—you have it with you."

"You could not bear it; you would hate me for the pain it would give you. Let me depart."

"Man, you wrong Maltravers. I see it now. You would darkly slander him whom you cannot openly defame. Go; I was wrong to listen to you,—go!"

"Lady Florence, beware how you taunt me into undeceiving you. Here is the letter,—it is his handwriting: will you read it? I warn you not."

"I will believe nothing but the evidence of my own eyes; give it me."

"Stay, then,—on two conditions. First, that you promise me sacredly that you will not disclose to Maltravers, without my consent, that you have seen this letter. Think not I fear his anger. No; but in the mortal encounter that must ensue, if you thus betray me, your character would be lowered in the world's eyes, and even I (my excuse unknown) might not appear to have acted with honour in obeying your desire and warning you, while there is yet time, of bartering love for avarice. Promise me."

"I do, I do most solemnly."

"Secondly, assure me that you will not ask to keep the letter, but will immediately restore it to me."

"I promise it. Now then."

"Take the letter."

Florence seized and rapidly read the fatal and garbled document. Her brain was dizzy, her eyes clouded, her ears rang as with the sound of water, she was sick and giddy with emotion; but she read enough. This letter was written, then, in answer to Castruccio's of last night; it avowed dislike of her character; it denied the sincerity of her love; it more than hinted the mercenary nature of his own feelings. Yes, even there, where she had garnered up her heart, she was not Florence the lovely and beloved woman, but Florence the wealthy and high-born heiress. The world which she had built upon the faith and heart of Maltravers crumbled away at her feet. The letter dropped from her hands; her whole form seemed to shrink and shrivel up; her teeth were set, and her cheek was as white as marble.

"O God!" cried Cesarini, stung with remorse. "Speak to me, speak to me, Florence! I did wrong; forget that hateful letter! I have been false, false!"

"Ah, false — say so again. No, no, I remember *he* told me — he, so wise, so deep a judge of human character that he would be sponsor for your faith — that your honour and heart were incorruptible. It is true; I thank you, — you have saved me from a terrible fate."

"Oh, Lady Florence, dear — too dear — yet, would that — Alas! she does not listen to me," muttered Castruccio, as Florence, pressing her hands to her temples, walked wildly to and fro the room. At length she paused opposite to Cesarini, looked him full in the face, returned him the letter without a word, and pointed to the door.

"No, no, do not bid me leave you yet," said Cesarini, trembling with repentant emotion, yet half beside himself with jealous rage at her love for his rival.

"My friend, go," said Florence, in a tone of voice singularly subdued and soft. "Do not fear me; I have more pride in me than even affection: but there are certain struggles in a woman's breast which she could never betray to any one, — any one but a mother. God help me, I have none! Go; when next we meet, I shall be calm."

She held out her hand as she spoke; the Italian dropped on his knee, kissed it convulsively, and fearful of trusting himself further, vanished from the room.

He had not been long gone before Maltravers was seen riding through the street. As he threw himself from his horse, he looked up at the window and kissed his hand at Lady Florence, who stood there watching his arrival with feelings indeed far different from those he anticipated. He entered the room lightly and gayly.

Florence stirred not to welcome him. He approached and took her hand; she withdrew it with a shudder.

"Are you not well, Florence?"

"I am well, for I have recovered."

"What do you mean? Why do you turn from me?"

Lady Florence fixed her eyes on him — eyes that literally blazed; her lip quivered with scorn.

"Mr. Maltravers, at length I know you. I understand the feelings with which you have sought a union between us. O God! why, why was I thus cursed with riches; why made a thing of barter and merchandise and avarice and low ambition? Take my wealth, take it, Mr. Maltravers, since that is what you prize. Heaven knows I can cast it willingly away; but leave the wretch whom you long deceived, and who now, wretch though she be, renounces and despises you!"

"Lady Florence, do I hear aright? Who has accused me to you?"

"None, sir, none; I would have believed none. Let it suffice that I am convinced that our union can be happy to neither. Question me no further; all intercourse between us is forever over!"

"Pause," said Maltravers, with cold and grave solemnity; "another word, and the gulf will become impassable. Pause!"

"Do not," exclaimed the unhappy lady, stung by what she considered the assurance of a hardened hypocrisy,— "do not affect this haughty superiority; it dupes me no longer. I was your slave while I loved you: the tie is broken. I am free, and I hate and scorn you! Mercenary and sordid as you are, your baseness of spirit revives the differences of our rank. Henceforth, Mr. Maltravers, I am Lady Florence Lascelles, and by that title alone will you know me. Begone, sir!"

As she spoke, with passion distorting every feature of her face, all her beauty vanished away from the eyes of the proud Maltravers as if by witchcraft,—the angel seemed transformed into the fury; and cold, bitter, and withering was the eye which he fixed upon that altered countenance.

"Mark me, Lady Florence Lascelles," said he, very calmly, "you have now said what you can never recall. Neither in man nor in woman did Ernest Maltravers ever forget or forgive a sentence which accused him of dishonour. I bid you farewell forever; and with my last words I condemn you to the darkest of all dooms,— the remorse that comes too late!" Slowly he moved away; and as the door closed upon that towering and haughty form, Florence already felt that his

course was working to its fulfilment. She rushed to the window, she caught one last glimpse of him as his horse bore him rapidly away. Ah! when shall they meet again?

CHAPTER IX.

AND now I live. Oh, wherefore do I live?

And with that pang I prayed to be no more. — WORDSWORTH.

It was about nine o'clock that evening, and Maltravers was alone in his room. His carriage was at the door, his servants were arranging the luggage; he was going that night to Burleigh. London, society, the world, were grown hateful to him; his galled and indignant spirit demanded solitude. At this time Lumley Ferrers entered.

"You will pardon my intrusion," said the latter, with his usual frankness, "but —"

"But what, sir? I am engaged."

"I shall be very brief. Maltravers, you are my old friend. I retain regard and affection for you, though our different habits have of late estranged us. I come to you from my cousin,—from Florence; there has been some misunderstanding between you. I called on her to-day after you left the house. Her grief affected me. I have only just quitted her. She has been told by some gossip or other some story or other,—women are credulous, foolish creatures; undeceive her, and I dare say all may be settled."

"Ferrers, if a man had spoken to me as Lady Florence did, his blood or mine must have flowed. And do you think that words that might have plunged me into the guilt of homicide if uttered by a man, I could ever pardon in one whom I had dreamed of for a wife? Never!"

"Pooh, pooh, women's words are wind. Don't throw away so splendid a match for such a trifle."

"Do you too, sir, mean to impute mercenary motives to me?"

"Heaven forbid! You know I am no coward, but I really don't want to fight you. Come, be reasonable."

"I dare say you mean well, but the breach is final,—all recurrence to it is painful and superfluous. I must wish you good evening."

"You have positively decided?"

"I have."

"Even if Lady Florence made the *amende honorable*?"

"Nothing on the part of Lady Florence could alter my resolution. The woman whom an honourable man, an English gentleman, makes the partner of his life, ought never to listen to a syllable against his fair name. His honour is hers; and if her lips, that should breathe comfort in calumny, only serve to retail the lie, she may be beautiful, gifted, wealthy, and high-born, but he takes a curse to his arms. That curse I have escaped."

"And this I am to say to my cousin?"

"As you will. And now stay, Lumley Ferrers, and hear me. I neither accuse nor suspect you; I desire not to pierce your heart, and in this case I cannot fathom your motives: but if it should so have happened that you have in any way ministered to Lady Florence Lascelles injurious opinions of my faith and honour, you will have much to answer for, and sooner or later there will come a day of reckoning between you and me."

"Mr. Maltravers, there can be no quarrel between us, with my cousin's fair name at stake, or else we should not now part without preparations for a more hostile meeting. I can bear your language. I, too, though no philosopher, can forgive. Come, man, you are heated,—it is very natural; let us part friends. Your hand."

"If you can take my hand, Lumley, you are innocent, and I have wronged you."

Lumley smiled, and cordially pressed the hand of his old friend.

As he descended the stairs Maltravers followed, and just

as Lumley turned into Curzon Street, the carriage whirled rapidly past him, and by the lamps he saw the pale and stern face of Maltravers.

It was a slow, drizzling rain,—one of those unwholesome nights frequent in London towards the end of autumn. Ferrers, however, insensible to the weather, walked slowly and thoughtfully towards his cousin's house. He was playing for a mighty stake, and hitherto the cast was in his favour; yet he was uneasy and perturbed. His conscience was tolerably proof to all compunction, as much from the levity as from the strength of his nature; and, Maltravers removed, he trusted in his knowledge of the human heart, and the smooth speciousness of his manner, to win at last, in the hand of Lady Florence, the object of his ambition. It was not on her affection, it was on her pique, her resentment, that he relied. "When a woman fancies herself slighted by the man she loves, the first person who proposes must be a clumsy wooer indeed if he does not carry her away." So reasoned Ferrers, but yet he was ruffled and disquieted. The truth must be spoken,—able, bold, sanguine, and scornful as he was, his spirit quailed before that of Maltravers; he feared the lion of that nature when fairly aroused. His own character had in it something of a woman's,—an unprincipled, gifted, aspiring, and subtle woman's; and in Maltravers—stern, simple, and masculine—he recognized the superior dignity of the "lords of the creation." He was overawed by the anticipation of a wrath and revenge which he felt he merited, and which he feared might be deadly.

While gradually, however, his spirit recovered its usual elasticity, he came in the vicinity of Lord Saxingham's house, and suddenly, by a corner of the street, his arm was seized; to his inexpressible astonishment he recognized in the muffled figure that accosted him the form of Florence Lascelles.

"Good heavens," he cried, "is it possible? You, alone in the streets at this hour, in such a night, too? How very wrong; how very imprudent!"

"Do not talk to me; I am almost mad as it is. I could not rest; I could not brave quiet, solitude, still less the face of

my father,—I could not! But quick, what says he? What excuse has he? Tell me everything; I will cling to a straw."

"And is this the proud Florence Lascelles?"

"No, it is the humbled Florence Lascelles. I have done with pride,—speak to me!"

"Ah, what a treasure is such a heart! How can he throw it away?"

"Does he deny?"

"He denies nothing; he expresses himself rejoiced to have escaped — such was his expression — a marriage in which his heart never was engaged. He is unworthy of you; forget him."

Florence shivered, and as Ferrers drew her arm in his own, her ungloved hand touched his, and the touch was like that of ice.

"What will the servants think? What excuse can we make?" said Ferrers, when they stood beneath the porch.

Florence did not reply; but as the door opened, she said softly,—

"I am ill, ill," and clung to Ferrers with that unnerved and heavy weight which betokens faintness.

The light glared on her, the faces of the lackeys betokened their undisguised astonishment. With a violent effort Florence recovered herself, for she had *not* yet done with pride, swept through the hall with her usual stately step, slowly ascended the broad staircase, and gained the solitude of her own room, to fall senseless on the floor.

BOOK IX.

Ἀχέροντι νυμφεύσω. — SOPHOCLES: *Antigone*.

"I go, the bride of Acheron."

Μέλλοντα ταῦτα. — *Ibid*, 1333.

"These things are in the future."

CHAPTER I.

THERE the action lies

In his true nature

. . . . What then? What rests?

Try what repentance can. — *Hamlet*.

I doubt he will be dead ere I come. — *King John*.

It was a fine afternoon in December when Lumley Ferrers turned from Lord Saxingham's door. The knockers were muffled, the windows on the third story were partially closed. There was sickness in that house.

Lumley's face was unusually grave; it was even sad. "So young, so beautiful," he muttered. "If ever I loved woman, I do believe I loved her; that love must be my excuse. I repent of what I have done; but I could not foresee that a mere lover's stratagem was to end in such effects. The meta-physician was very right when he said, 'We only sympathize with feelings we know ourselves.' A little disappointment in love could not have hurt me much; it is d—d odd it should hurt her so. I am altogether out of luck; old Templeton — I beg his pardon, Lord Vargrave (by the by he gets heartier every day; what a constitution he has!) — seems cross with

me. He did not like the idea that I should marry Lady Florence; and when I thought that vision might have been realized, hinted that I was disappointing some expectations he had formed,—I can't make out what he means. Then, too, the Government have offered that place to Maltravers instead of to me. In fact, my star is not in the ascendant. Poor Florence, though, I would really give a great deal to know her restored to health! I have done a villanous thing, but I thought it only a clever one. However, regret is a fool's passion. By Jupiter! talking of fools, here comes Cesarini."

Wan, haggard, almost spectral, his hat over his brows, his dress neglected, his air reckless and fierce, Cesarini crossed the way, and thus accosted Lumley:—

"We have murdered her, Ferrers; and her ghost will haunt us to our dying day!"

"Talk prose; you know I am no poet. What do you mean?"

"She is worse to-day," groaned Cesarini, in a hollow voice. "I wander like a lost spirit round the house; I question all who come from it. Tell me, oh, tell me, is there hope?"

"I do indeed trust so," replied Ferrers, fervently. "The illness has only of late assumed an alarming appearance. At first it was merely a severe cold, caught by imprudent exposure one rainy night. Now they fear it has settled on the lungs; but if we could get her abroad, all might be well."

"You think so, honestly?"

"I do. Courage, my friend; do not reproach yourself: it has nothing to do with us. She was taken ill of a cold, not of a letter, man!"

"No, no; I judge her heart by my own. Oh that I could recall the past! Look at me; I am the wreck of what I was; day and night the recollection of my falsehood haunts me with remorse."

"Pshaw! we will go to Italy together, and in your beautiful land love will replace love."

"I am half resolved, Ferrers."

"Ha! — to do what?"

"To write,—to reveal all to her."

The hardy complexion of Ferrers grew livid; his brow became dark with a terrible expression.

"Do so,—and fall the next day by my hand; my aim in slighter quarrel never erred."

"Do you dare to threaten me?"

"Do you dare to betray me? Betray one who, if he sinned, sinned on your account, in your cause; who would have secured to you the loveliest bride and the most princely dower in England; and whose only offence against you is that he cannot command life and health?"

"Forgive me," said the Italian, with great emotion,—"*forgive me*, and do not misunderstand; I would not have betrayed *you*,—there is honour among villains. I would have confessed only my own crime; I would never have revealed yours,—why should I? It is unnecessary."

"Are you in earnest, are you sincere?"

"By my soul!"

"Then, indeed, you are worthy of my friendship. You will assume the whole forgery — an ugly word, but it avoids circumlocution — to be your own?"

"I will."

Ferrers paused a moment, and then stopped suddenly short.

"You will swear this!"

"By all that is holy."

"Then mark me, Cesarini: if to-morrow Lady Florence be worse, I will throw no obstacle in the way of your confession, should you resolve to make it,—I will even use that influence which you leave me, to palliate your offence, to win your pardon. And yet to resign your hopes, to surrender one so loved to the arms of one so hated,—it is magnanimous, it is noble,—it is above my standard! Do as you will."

Cesarini was about to reply, when a servant on horseback abruptly turned the corner, almost at full speed. He pulled in; his eye fell upon Lumley; he dismounted.

"Oh, Mr. Ferrers," said the man, breathlessly, "I have

been to your house; they told me I might find you at Lord Saxingham's. I was just going there — ”

“Well, well, what is the matter?”

“My poor master, sir,— my lord, I mean — ”

“What of him?”

“Had a fit, sir; the doctors are with him. My mistress — for my lord can't speak — sent me express for you.”

“Lend me your horse. There, just lengthen the stirrups.”

While the groom was engaged at the saddle, Ferrers turned to Cesarini. “Do nothing rashly,” said he, — “I would say, if I might, nothing at all, without consulting me; but mind, I rely at all events on your promise, your oath.”

“You may,” said Cesarini, gloomily.

“Farewell, then,” said Lumley, as he mounted; and in a few moments he was out of sight.

CHAPTER II.

O WORLD! thou wast the forest to this hart;

Dost thou here lie? — *Julius Caesar.*

As Lumley leaped from his horse at his uncle's door, the disorder and bustle of those demesnes, in which the severe eye of the master usually preserved a repose and silence as complete as if the affairs of life were carried on by clock-work, struck upon him sensibly. Upon the trim lawn the old women employed in cleaning and weeding the walks were all assembled in a cluster, shaking their heads ominously in concert, and carrying on their comments in a confused whisper. In the hall the housemaid (and it was the first housemaid whom Lumley had ever seen in that house, so invisibly were the wheels of the domestic machine carried on) was leaning on her broom, “swallowing with open mouth a foot-

man's news." It was as if, with the first slackening of the rigid rein, human nature broke loose from the conventual stillness in which it had ever paced its peaceful path in that formal mansion.

"How is he?"

"My lord is better, sir; he has spoken, I believe."

At this moment a young face, swollen and red with weeping, looked down from the stairs; and presently Evelyn rushed breathlessly into the hall.

"Oh, come up, come up, Cousin Lumley; he cannot, cannot die in your presence,—you always seem *so full* of life! He cannot die; you do not think he will die? Oh, take me with you; they won't let me go to him!"

"Hush, my dear little girl, hush. Follow me lightly,—that is right."

Lumley reached the door, tapped gently, entered; and the child also stole in unobserved, or at least unprevented. Lumley drew aside the curtains; the new lord was lying on his bed, with his head propped by pillows, his eyes wide open, with a glassy, but not insensible stare, and his countenance fearfully changed.

Lady Vargrave was kneeling on the other side of the bed, one hand clasped in her husband's, the other bathing his temples, and her tears falling, without sob or sound, fast and copiously down her pale fair cheeks.

Two doctors were conferring in the recess of the window, an apothecary was mixing drugs at a table, and two of the oldest female servants of the house were standing near the physicians, trying to overhear what was said.

"My dear, dear uncle, how are you?" asked Lumley.

"Ah, you are come, then," said the dying man, in a feeble yet distinct voice; "that is well,—I have much to say to you."

"But not now, not now; you are not strong enough," said the wife, imploringly.

The doctors moved to the bedside. Lord Vargrave waved his hand and raised his head.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I feel as if death were hastening

upon me; I have much need, while my senses remain, to confer with my nephew. Is the present a fitting time? If I delay, are you sure that I shall have another?"

The doctors looked at each other.

"My lord," said one, "it may perhaps settle and relieve your mind to converse with your nephew; afterwards you may more easily compose yourself to sleep."

"Take this cordial, then," said the other doctor.

The sick man obeyed. One of the physicians approached Lumley and beckoned him aside.

"Shall we send for his lordship's lawyer?" whispered the leech.

"I am his heir-at-law," thought Lumley. "Why, *no*, my dear sir, no, I think not, unless he expresses a desire to see him; doubtless my poor uncle has already settled his worldly affairs. What is his state?"

The doctor shook his head. "I will speak to you, sir, after you have left his lordship."

"What is the matter there?" cried the patient, sharply and querulously. "Clear the room; I would be alone with my nephew."

The doctors disappeared; the old women reluctantly followed; when suddenly the little Evelyn sprang forward and threw herself on the breast of the dying man, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"My poor child, my sweet child, my own, own darling!" gasped out Lord Vargrave, folding his weak arms round her. "Bless you, bless you! And God *will* bless you. My wife," he added, with a voice far more tender than Lumley had ever before heard him address to Lady Vargrave, "if these be the last words I utter to you, let them express all the gratitude I feel for you, for duties never more piously discharged. You did not love me, it is true; and in health and pride that knowledge often made me unjust to you. I have been severe, — you have had much to bear; forgive me."

"Oh! do not talk thus; you have been nobler, kinder than my deserts. How much I owe you, — how little I have done in return!"

"I cannot bear this; leave me, my dear, leave me. I may live yet,— I hope I may; I do not want to die. The cup may pass from me. Go, go,— and you, my child."

"Ah, let *me* stay."

Lord Vargrave kissed the little creature as she clung to his neck with passionate affection, and then, placing her in her mother's arms, fell back exhausted on his pillow. Lumley, with handkerchief to his eyes, opened the door to Lady Vargrave, who sobbed bitterly, and carefully closing it, resumed his station by his uncle.

When Lumley Ferrers left the room, his countenance was gloomy and excited rather than sad. He hurried to the room which he usually occupied, and remained there for some hours while his uncle slept,— a long and sound sleep. But the mother and the stepchild (now restored to the sick-room) did not desert their watch.

It wanted about an hour to midnight when the senior physician sought the nephew.

"Your uncle asks for you, Mr. Ferrers; and I think it right to say that his last moments approach. We have done all that can be done."

"Is he fully aware of his danger?"

"He is, and has spent the last two hours in prayer; it is a Christian's death-bed, sir."

"Humph!" said Ferrers, as he followed the physician.

The room was darkened,— a single lamp, carefully shaded, burned on a table, on which lay the Book of Life in Death; and with awe and grief on their faces, the mother and the child were kneeling beside the bed.

"Come here, Lumley," faltered forth the fast-dying man.

"There are none but you three,— nearest and dearest to me? That is well. Lumley, then, you know all,— my wife, he knows all. My child, give your hand to your cousin,— so you are now plighted. When you grow up, Evelyn, you will know that it is my last wish and prayer that you should be the wife of Lumley Ferrers. In giving you this angel, Lumley, I atone to you for all seeming injustice. And to you, my child, I secure the rank and honours to which I have

painfully climbed, and which I am forbidden to enjoy. Be kind to her, Lumley,—you have a good and frank heart; let it be her shelter; she has never known a harsh word. God bless you all, and God forgive me! Pray for me. Lumley, to-morrow you will be Lord Vargrave, and by and by” — here a ghastly, but exultant smile flitted over the speaker’s countenance — “you will be my Lady — Lady Vargrave. Lady — so — so — Lady Var — ”

The words died on his trembling lips; he turned round, and though he continued to breathe for more than an hour, Lord Vargrave never uttered another syllable.

CHAPTER III.

HOPES and fears

Start up alarmed, and o’er life’s narrow verge

Look down — On what? A fathomless abyss. — **YOUNG.**

Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adieu!

Much Ado about Nothing.

THE wound which Maltravers had received was peculiarly severe and rankling. It is true that he had never been what is called violently in love with Florence Lascelles; but from the moment in which he had been charmed and surprised into the character of a declared suitor, it was consonant with his scrupulous and loyal nature to view only the bright side of Florence’s gifts and qualities, and to seek to enamour his grateful fancy with her beauty, her genius, and her tenderness for himself. He had thus forced and formed his thoughts and hopes to centre all in one object; and Florence and the Future had grown words which conveyed the same meaning to his mind. Perhaps he felt more bitterly her sudden and stunning accusations, couched as they were in language so unqualified, because they fell upon his pride

rather than his affection, and were not softened away by the thousand excuses and remembrances which a passionate love would have invented and recalled. It was a deep, concentrated sense of injury and insult that hardened and soured his whole nature,—wounded vanity, wounded pride, and wounded honour.

And the blow, too, came upon him at a time when he was most dissatisfied with all other prospects. He was disgusted with the littleness of the agents and springs of political life; he had formed a weary contempt of the barrenness of literary reputation. At thirty years of age he had necessarily outlived the sanguine elasticity of early youth, and he had already broken up many of those later toys in business and ambition which afford the rattle and the hobby-horse to our maturer manhood. Always asking for something too refined and too exalted for human life, every new proof of unworthiness in men and things saddened or revolted a mind still too fastidious for that quiet contentment with the world as it is which we must all learn before we can make our philosophy practical and our genius as fertile of the harvest as it may be prodigal of the blossom. Haughty, solitary, and unsocial, the ordinary resources of mortified and disappointed men were not for Ernest Maltravers. Rigidly secluded in his country retirement, he consumed the days in moody wanderings, and in the evenings he turned to books with a spirit disdainful and fatigued. So much had he already learned, that books taught him little that he did not already know. And the biographies of authors, those ghost-like beings who seem to have had no life but in the shadow of their own haunting and imperishable thoughts, dimmed the inspiration he might have caught from their pages. Those slaves of the Lamp, those Silkworms of the Closet, how little had they enjoyed, how little had they lived! Condemned to a mysterious fate by the wholesale destinies of the world, they seemed born but to toil and to spin thoughts for the common crowd, and, their task performed in drudgery and in darkness, to die when no further service could be wrung from their exhaustion. Names had they been in life, and as names they lived forever,—in

life as in death, airy and unsubstantial phantoms. It pleased Maltravers at this time to turn a curious eye towards the obscure and half-extinct philosophies of the ancient world. He compared the Stoics with the Epicureans,—those Epicureans who had given their own version to the simple and abstemious utilitarianism of their master. He asked which was the wiser,—to sharpen pain or to deaden pleasure; to bear all, or to enjoy all; and, by a natural reaction which often happens to us in life, this man, hitherto so earnest, active-spirited, and resolved on great things, began to yearn for the drowsy pleasures of indolence. The Garden grew more tempting than the Porch. He seriously revolved the old alternative of the Grecian demigod,—might it not be wiser to abandon the grave pursuits to which he had been addicted, to dethrone the august but severe ideal in his heart, to cultivate the light loves and voluptuous trifles of the herd, and to plant the brief space of youth yet left to him with the myrtle and the rose? As water flows over water, so new schemes rolled upon new—sweeping away every momentary impression, and leaving the surface facile equally to receive and to forget. Such is the common state with men of imagination in those crises of life when some great revolution of designs and hopes unsettles elements too susceptible of every changing wind. And thus the weak are destroyed, while the strong relapse, after terrible but unknown convulsions, into that solemn harmony and order from which destiny and God draw their uses to mankind.

It was from this irresolute contest between antagonist principles that Maltravers was aroused by the following letter from Florence Lascelles:—

“ For three days and three sleepless nights I have debated with myself whether or not I ought to address you. Oh, Ernest, were I what I was, in health, in pride, I might fear that, generous as you are, you would misconstrue my appeal; but that is now impossible. Our union never can take place, and my hopes bound themselves to one sweet and melancholy hope,—that you will remove from my last hours the cold and dark shadow of your resentment. We have both been cruelly deceived and betrayed. Three days ago I discovered the perfidy that has

been practised against us. And then, ah ! then, with all the weak human anguish of discovering it too late (*your curse is fulfilled*, Ernest !), I had at least one moment of proud, of exquisite rapture. Ernest Maltravers, the hero of my dreams, stood pure and lofty as of old, — a thing it was not unworthy to love, to mourn, to die for. A letter in your handwriting had been shown to me, garbled and altered, as it seems. But I detected not the imposture, — it was yourself, yourself alone, brought in false and horrible witness against yourself ! And could you think that any other evidence, the words and oaths of others, would have convicted you in my eyes ? There you wronged me. But I deserved it, — I had bound myself to secrecy ; the seal is taken from my lips in order to be set upon my tomb. Ernest, beloved Ernest, — beloved till the last breath is extinct, till the last throb of this heart is stilled, — write me one word of comfort and of pardon. You will believe what I have imperfectly written, for *you* ever trusted my faith, if you have blamed my faults. I am now comparatively happy, — a word from you will make me blessed. And Fate has perhaps been more merciful to both than in our short-sighted and querulous human vision we might, perhaps, believe ; for now that the frame is brought low, — and in the solitude of my chamber I can duly and humbly commune with mine own heart, — I see the aspect of those faults which I once mistook for virtues, and feel that had we been united, I, loving you ever, might not have constituted your happiness, and so have known the misery of losing your affection. May He who formed you for glorious and yet all unaccomplished purposes strengthen you when these eyes can no longer sparkle at your triumphs, nor weep at your lightest sorrow. You will go on in your broad and luminous career ; a few years, and my remembrance will have left but the vestige of a dream behind. But, but — I can write no more. God bless you !”

CHAPTER IV.

OH, stop this headlong current of your goodness ;
It comes too fast upon a feeble soul.

DRYDEN : *Sebastian and Doras*.

THE smooth physician had paid his evening visit, Lord Saxingham had gone to a Cabinet dinner, — for Life must ever walk side by side with Death, — and Lady Florence Lascelles

was alone. It was a room adjoining her sleeping-apartment, — a room in which, in the palmy days of the brilliant and wayward heiress, she had loved to display her fanciful and peculiar taste. There had she been accustomed to muse, to write, to study; there had she first been dazzled by the novel glow of Ernest's undiurnal and stately thoughts; there had she first conceived the romance of girlhood, which had led her to confer with him unknown; there had she first confessed to herself that fancy had begotten love; there had she gone through love's short and exhausting process of lone emotion, — the doubt, the hope, the ecstasy; the reverse, the terror; the inanimate despondency, the agonized despair! And there now, sadly and patiently, she awaited the gradual march of inevitable decay. And books and pictures and musical instruments and marble busts half-shadowed by classic draperies, and all the delicate elegances of womanly refinement, still invested the chamber with a grace as cheerful as if youth and beauty were to be the occupants forever, and the dark and noisome vault were not the only lasting residence for the things of clay!

Florence Lascelles was dying, but not indeed wholly of that common, if mystic, malady, a broken heart. Her health, always delicate, because always preyed upon by a nervous, irritable, and feverish spirit, had been gradually and invisibly undermined even before Ernest confessed his love. In the singular lustre of those large-pupilled eyes, in the luxuriant transparency of that glorious bloom, the experienced might long since have traced the seeds which cradled death. In the night when her restless and maddened heart so imprudently drove her forth to forestall the communication of Lumley (whom she had sent to Maltravers, she scarce knew for what object, or with what hope), in that night she was already in a high state of fever. The rain and the chill struck the growing disease within; her excitement gave it food and fire; delirium succeeded; and in that most fearful and fatal of all medical errors, which robs the frame, when it most needs strength, of the very principle of life, they had bled her into a temporary calm and into permanent and in-

curable weakness. Consumption seized its victim. The physicians who attended her were the most renowned in London, and Lord Saxingham was firmly persuaded that there was no danger. It was not in his nature to think that death would take so great a liberty with Lady Florence Lascelles when there were so many poor people in the world whom there would be no impropriety in removing from it. But Florence knew her danger, and her high spirit did not quail before it. Yet when Cesarini, stung beyond endurance by the horrors of his remorse, wrote and confessed all his own share of the fatal treason, though, faithful to his promise, he concealed that of his accomplice,—then, ah, then she did indeed repine at her doom, and long to look once more with the eyes of love and joy upon the face of the beautiful world. But the illness of the body usually brings out a latent power and philosophy of the soul which health never knows; and God has mercifully ordained it as the customary lot of nature that in proportion as we decline into the grave, the sloping path is made smooth and easy to our feet; and every day, as the films of clay are removed from our eyes, Death loses the false aspect of the spectre, and we fall at last into its arms as a wearied child upon the bosom of its mother.

It was with a heavy heart that Lady Florence listened to the monotonous clicking of the clock that announced the departure of moments few, yet not precious, still spared to her. Her face buried in her hands, she bent over the small table beside her sofa, and indulged her melancholy thoughts. Bowed was the haughty crest, unnerved the elastic shape that had once seemed born for majesty and command. No friends were near, for Florence had never made friends; solitary had been her youth, and solitary were her dying hours.

As she thus sat and mused, a sound of carriage-wheels in the street below slightly shook the room; it ceased,—the carriage stopped at the door. Florence looked up. “No, no, it cannot be,” she muttered; yet while she spoke, a faint flush passed over her sunken and faded cheek, and the bosom heaved beneath the robe, “a world too wide for its shrunk” proportions. There was a silence which to her seemed inter-

minable, and she turned away with a deep sigh and a chill sinking of the heart.

At this time her woman entered with a meaning and flurried look.

"I beg your pardon, my lady, but —"

"But what?"

"Mr. Maltravers has called and asked for your ladyship; so, my lady, Mr. Burton sent for me, and I said my lady is too unwell to see any one; but Mr. Maltravers would not be denied; and he is waiting in my lord's library, and insisted on my coming up and 'nouncing him, my lady."

Now, Mrs. Shinfield's words were not euphonistic, nor her voice mellifluous; but never had eloquence seemed to Florence so effective. Youth, love, beauty, all rushed back upon her at once, brightening her eyes, her cheek, and filling up ruin with sudden and deceitful light.

"Well," she said, after a pause, "let Mr. Maltravers come up."

"Come up, my lady? Bless me! Let me just 'range your hair; your ladyship is really in such dish-a-bill."

"Best as it is, Shinfield; he will excuse all. Go."

Mrs. Shinfield shrugged her shoulders and departed. A few moments more, a step on the stairs, the creaking of the door, and Maltravers and Florence were again alone. He stood motionless on the threshold. She had involuntarily risen, and so they stood opposite to each other, and the lamp fell full upon her face. O Heaven, when did that sight cease to haunt the heart of Maltravers! When shall that altered aspect not pass as a ghost before his eyes! There it is, faithful and reproachful alike in solitude and in crowds: it is seen in the glare of noon; it passes dim and wan at night beneath the stars and the earth; it looked into his heart, and left its likeness there forever and forever! Those cheeks, once so beautifully rounded, now sunken into lines and hollows; the livid darkness beneath the eyes; the whitened lip; the sharp, anxious, worn expression, which had replaced that glorious and beaming *regard* from which all the life of genius, all the sweet pride of womanhood, had glowed

forth, and in which not only the intelligence, but the eternity, of the soul seemed visibly wrought!

There he stood, aghast and appalled. At length a low groan broke from his lips; he rushed forward, sank on his knees beside her, and clasping both her hands, sobbed aloud as he covered them with kisses. All the iron of his strong nature was broken down, and his emotions, long silenced, and now uncontrollable and resistless, were something terrible to behold.

"Do not, do not weep so," murmured Lady Florence, frightened by his vehemence; "I am sadly changed, but the fault is mine,—Ernest, it is mine. Best, kindest, gentlest, how could I have been so mad? And you forgive me? I am yours again,—a little while yours. Ah, do not grieve while I am so blessed!"

As she spoke, her tears — tears from a source how different from that whence broke the scorching and intolerable agony of his own! — fell soft upon his bended head and the hands that still convulsively strained hers. Maltravers looked wildly up into her countenance, and shuddered as he saw her attempt to smile. He rose abruptly, threw himself into a chair, and covered his face. He was seeking by a violent effort to master himself, and it was only by the heaving of his chest, and now and then a gasp as for breath, that he betrayed the stormy struggle within.

Florence gazed at him a moment in bitter, in almost selfish penitence. "And this was the man who seemed to me so callous to the softer sympathies; this was the heart I trampled upon; this the nature I distrusted!"

She came near him, trembling and with feeble steps; she laid her hand upon his shoulder; and the fondness of love came over her, and she wound her arms around him.

"It is our fate,—it is my fate," said Maltravers at last, awaking as from a hideous dream, and in a hollow but calm voice; "we are the things of destiny, and the wheel has crushed us. It is an awful state of being, this human life! What are wisdom, virtue, faith to men, piety to Heaven, all the nurture we bestow on ourselves, all our desire to win a

loftier sphere,—when we are thus the tools of the merest chance, the victims of the pettiest villany; and our very existence—our very senses almost—at the mercy of every traitor and every fool!”

There was something in Ernest's voice, as well as in his reflections, which appeared so unnaturally calm and deep that it startled Florence with a fear more acute than his previous violence had done. He rose, and muttering to himself, walked to and fro, as if insensible of her presence; in fact he was so. At length he stopped short, and fixing his eyes upon Lady Florence, said in a whispered and thrilling tone,—

“Now, then, the name of our undoer?”

“No, Ernest, no, never, unless you promise me to forego the purpose which I read in your eyes. He has confessed, he is penitent,—I have forgiven him; you will do so too!”

“His name!” repeated Maltravers; and his face, before very flushed, was unnaturally pale.

“Forgive him,—promise me.”

“His name, I say; his name!”

“Is this kind? You terrify me; you will kill me!” faltered out Florence; and she sank on the sofa exhausted. Her nerves, now so weakened, were perfectly unstrung by his vehemence, and she wrung her hands and wept piteously.

“You will not tell me his name?” said Maltravers, softly. “Be it so. I will ask no more; I can discover it myself. Fate the Avenger will reveal it.”

At the thought he grew more composed; and as Florence wept on, the unnatural concentration and fierceness of his mind again gave way, and seating himself beside her, he uttered all that could soothe and comfort and console. And Florence *was* soon soothed! And there, while over their heads the grim skeleton was holding the funeral pall, they again exchanged their vows, and again, with feelings fonder than of old, spoke of love.

CHAPTER V.

ERICHTHO, then,
Breathes her dire murmurs, which enforce him bear
Her baneful secrets to the spirits of horror. — MARLOWE.

WITH a heavy step Maltravers ascended the stairs of his lonely house that night, and heavily, with a suppressed groan, did he sink upon the first chair that proffered rest.

It was intensely cold. During his long interview with Lady Florence, his servant had taken the precaution to go to Seamore Place and make some hasty preparations for the owner's return. But the bedroom looked comfortless and bare, the curtains were taken down, the carpets were taken up,—a single man's housekeeper is wonderfully provident in these matters; the moment his back is turned, she bustles, she displaces, she exults: "Things can be put a little to rights!" Even the fire would not burn clear, but gleamed sullen and fitful from the smothering fuel. It was a large chamber, and the lights imperfectly filled it. On the table lay parliamentary papers and pamphlets and bills and presentation-books from younger authors,—evidences of the teeming business of that restless machine the world. But of all this Maltravers was not sensible; the winter frost numbed not his feverish veins. His servant, who loved him, as all who saw much of Maltravers did, fidgeted anxiously about the room, and plied the sullen fire, and laid out the comfortable dressing-robe, and placed wine on the table, and asked questions which were not answered, and pressed service which was not heeded. The little wheels of life go on, even when the great wheel is paralyzed or broken. Maltravers was, if I may so express it, in a kind of mental trance. His emotions had left him thoroughly exhausted. He felt that torpor which succeeds and is again the precursor of great woe. At length he was alone, and the solitude half uncon-

sciously restored him to the sense of his heavy misery; for it may be observed that when misfortune has stricken us home, the presence of any one seems to interfere between the memory and the heart. Withdraw the intruder, and the lifted hammer falls at once upon the anvil! He rose as the door closed on his attendant, rose with a start, and pushed the hat from his gathered brows. He walked for some moments to and fro, and the air of the room, freezing as it was, oppressed him.

There are times when the arrow quivers within us, in which all space seems too confined. Like the wounded hart, we could fly on forever; there is a vague desire of escape,—a yearning, almost insane, to get out from our own selves; the soul struggles to flee away, and take the wings of the morning.

Impatiently, at last, did Maltravers throw open his window; it communicated with a balcony built out to command the wide view which, from a certain height, that part of the park affords. He stepped into the balcony and bared his breast to the keen air. The uncomfortable and icy heavens looked down upon the hoar-rime that gathered over the grass and the ghostly boughs of the deathlike trees. All things in the world without brought the thought of the grave, and the pause of being, and the withering up of beauty, closer and closer to his soul. In the palpable and griping winter, death itself seemed to wind around him its skeleton and joyless arms. And as thus he stood, and wearied with contending against, passively yielded to, the bitter passions that wrung and gnawed his heart, he heard not a sound at the door, nor the footsteps on the stairs, nor knew he that a visitor was in his room, till he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and turning round, he beheld the white and livid countenance of Castuccio Cesarini.

"It is a dreary night and a solemn hour, Maltravers," said the Italian, with a distorted smile,— "a fitting night and time for my interview with you."

"Away!" said Maltravers, in an impatient tone. "I am not at leisure for these mock heroics."

"Ay, but you shall hear me to the end. I have watched your arrival, I have counted the hours in which you remained with her, I have followed you home. If you have human passions, humanity itself must be dried up within you, and the wild beast in his cavern is not more fearful to encounter. Thus, then, I seek and brave you. Be still. Has Florence revealed to you the name of him who belied you, and who betrayed herself to the death?"

"Ha!" said Maltravers, growing very pale, and fixing his eyes on Cesarini, "you are not the man,—my suspicions lighted elsewhere."

"I am the man. Do thy worst."

Scarce were the words uttered, when, with a fierce cry, Maltravers threw himself on the Italian; he tore him from his footing, he grasped him in his arms as a child, he literally whirled him around and on high; and in that maddening paroxysm, it was, perhaps, but the balance of a feather, in the conflicting elements of revenge and reason, which withheld Maltravers from hurling the criminal from the fearful height on which they stood. The temptation passed; Cesarini leaned safe, unharmed, but half senseless with mingled rage and fear, against the wall.

He was alone; Maltravers had left him, had fled from himself,—fled into the chamber; fled for refuge from human passions to the wing of the All-Seeing and All-Present. "Father," he groaned, sinking on his knees, "support me, save me; without Thee I am lost."

Slowly Cesarini recovered himself, and re-entered the apartment. A string in his brain was already loosened, and, sullen and ferocious, he returned again to goad the lion that had spared him. Maltravers had already risen from his brief prayer. With locked and rigid countenance, with arms folded on his breast, he stood confronting the Italian, who advanced towards him with a menacing brow and arm, but halted involuntarily at the sight of that commanding aspect.

"Well, then," said Maltravers at last, with a tone preternaturally calm and low, "you then are the man. Speak on: what arts did you employ?"

"Your own letter. When, many months ago, I wrote to tell you of the hopes it was mine to conceive, and to ask your opinion of her I loved, how did you answer me? With doubts, with depreciation, with covert and polished scorn, of the very woman, whom, with a deliberate treachery, you afterwards wrested from my worshipping and adoring love. That letter I garbled. I made the doubts you expressed of my happiness seem doubts of your own. I changed the dates; I made the letter itself appear written, not on your first acquaintance with her, but subsequent to your plighted and accepted vows. Your own handwriting convicted you of mean suspicions and of sordid motives. These were my arts."

"They were most noble. Do you abide by them, or repent?"

"For what I have done to *thee* I have no repentance. Nay, I regard thee still as the aggressor. Thou hast robbed me of her who was all the world to me; and be thine excuses what they may, I hate thee with a hate that cannot slumber,—that abjures the abject name of remorse! I exult in the very agonies thou endurest. But for her,—the stricken, the dying! O God, O God! The blow falls upon mine own head!"

"Dying!" said Maltravers, slowly and with a shudder. "No, no; not dying,—or what art thou? Her murderer! And what must I be? Her avenger!"

Overpowered with his own passions, Cesarini sank down and covered his face with his clasped hands. Maltravers stalked gloomily to and fro the apartment. There was silence for some moments.

At length Maltravers paused opposite Cesarini and thus addressed him:—

"You have come hither not so much to confess the basest crime of which man can be guilty, as to gloat over my anguish and to brave me to revenge my wrongs. Go, man, go; for the present you are safe. While she lives, my life is not mine to hazard; if she recover, I can pity you and forgive. To me your offence, foul though it be, sinks below contempt itself. It is the consequences of that crime as they relate to — to — that noble and suffering woman which can alone

raise the despicable into the tragic and make your life a worthy and a necessary offering,—not to revenge, but justice. Life for life, victim for victim! 'T is the old law,—'t is a righteous one."

"You shall not, with your accursed coldness, thus dispose of me as you will, and arrogate the option to smite or save! No," continued Cesarini, stamping his foot,— "no; far from seeking forbearance at your hands, I dare and defy you! You think I have injured you,—I, on the other hand, consider that the wrong has come from yourself. But for you, she might have loved me,—have been mine. Let that pass. But for you, at least, it is certain that I should neither have sullied my soul with a vile sin, nor brought the brightest of human beings to the grave. If she dies, the murder may be mine, but you were the cause,—the devil that tempted to the offence. I defy and spit upon you; I have no softness left in me; my veins are fire,—my heart thirsts for blood. You, you have still the privilege to see, to bless, to tend her; and I—I, who loved her so, who could have kissed the earth she trod on—I— Well, well, no matter. I hate you; I insult you; I call you villain and dastard; I throw myself on the laws of honour, and I demand that conflict you defer or deny!"

"Home, doter, home; fall on thy knees and pray to Heaven for pardon; make up thy dread account; repine not at the days yet thine to wash the black spot from thy soul. For, while I speak, I foresee too well that her days are numbered, and with her thread of life is entwined thine own. Within twelve hours from her last moment, we shall meet again. But now I am as ice and stone; thou canst not move me. Her closing life shall not be darkened by the aspect of blood, by the thought of the sacrifice it demands. Begone, or menials shall cast thee from my door; those lips are too base to breathe the same air as honest men. Begone, I say, begone!"

Though scarce a muscle moved in the lofty countenance of Maltravers, though no frown darkened the majestic brow, though no fire broke from the steadfast and scornful eye,

there was a kingly authority in the aspect, in the extended arm, the stately crest, and a power in the swell of the stern voice, which awed and quelled the unhappy being whose own passions exhausted and unmanned him. He strove to fling back scorn to scorn; but his lips trembled, and his voice died in hollow murmurs within his breast. Maltravers regarded him with a crushing and intense disdain. The Italian, with shame and wrath, wrestled against himself, but in vain; the cold eye that was fixed upon him was as a spell which the fiend within him could not rebel against or resist. Mechanically he moved to the door; then, turning round, he shook his clenched hand at Maltravers, and with a wild, maniacal laugh rushed from the apartment.

CHAPTER VI.

ON some fond breast the parting soul relies. — GRAY.

NOR a day passed in which Maltravers was absent from the side of Florence. He came early, he went late. He subsided into his former character of an accepted suitor without a word of explanation with Lord Saxingham. That task was left to Florence. She doubtless performed it well, for his lordship seemed satisfied, though grave and, almost for the first time in his life, sad. Maltravers never reverted to the cause of their unhappy dissension, nor from that night did he once give way to whatever might be his more agonized and fierce emotions; he never affected to reproach himself,— he never bewailed with a vain despair their approaching separation. Whatever it cost him, he stood collected and stoical in the intense power of his self-control. He had but one object, one desire, one hope,— to save the last hours of Florence Lascelles from every pang; to brighten and smooth the passage across the Solemn Bridge. His forethought, his presence of mind, his care, his tenderness, never forsook him for an

instant; they went beyond the attributes of men, they went into all the fine, the indescribable minutiae by which woman makes herself, "in pain and anguish," the "ministering angel." It was as if he had nerved and braced his whole nature to one duty; as if that duty were more felt than affection itself; as if he were resolved that Florence should not remember that *she had no mother!*

And oh, then, how Florence loved him! How far more luxurious, in its grateful and clinging fondness, was that love than the wild and jealous fire of their earlier connection! Her own character, as is often the case in lingering illness, became incalculably more gentle and softened down as the shadows closed around it. She loved to make him read and talk to her; and her ancient poetry of thought now grew mellowed, as it were, into religion, which is indeed poetry with a stronger wing. There was a world beyond the grave; there was life out of the chrysalis sleep of death,—they would yet be united. And Maltravers, who was a solemn and intense believer in the GREAT HOPE, did not neglect the purest and highest of all the fountains of solace.

Often in that quiet room in that gorgeous mansion which had been the scene of all vain or worldly schemes, of flirtations and feastings and political meetings and Cabinet dinners and all the bubbles of the passing wave,—often there did these persons, whose position to each other had been so suddenly and so strangely changed, converse on those matters, daring and divine, which "make the bridal of the earth and sky."

"How fortunate am I," said Florence one day, "that my choice fell on one who thinks as you do! How your words elevate and exalt me! Yet once I never dreamed of asking your creed on these questions. It is in sorrow or sickness that we learn why Faith was given as a soother to man,—Faith, which is Hope with a holier name; Hope that knows neither deceit nor death. Ah, how wisely do you speak of the *philosophy* of belief! It is indeed the telescope through which the stars grow large upon our gaze. And to you, Ernest, my beloved,—comprehended and known at last,—to

you I leave, when I am gone, that monitor, that friend; you will know yourself what you teach to me. And when you look, not on the heaven alone, but in all space,—on all the illimitable creation,—you will know that I am there! For the home of a spirit is wherever spreads the Universal Presence of God. And to what numerous stages of being, what paths, what duties, what active and glorious tasks in other worlds, may we not be reserved,—perhaps to know and share them together, and mount age after age higher in the scale of being. For surely in heaven there is no pause or torpor; we do not lie down in calm and unimprovable repose. Movement and progress will remain the law and condition of existence. And there will be efforts and duties for us above, as there have been below.”

It was in this theory, which Maltravers shared, that the character of Florence, her overflowing life and activity of thought, her aspirations, her ambition, were still displayed. It was not so much to the calm and rest of the grave that she extended her unreluctant gaze, as to the light and glory of a renewed and progressive existence.

It was while thus they sat, the low voice of Ernest, tranquil yet half trembling with the emotions he sought to restrain, sometimes sobering, sometimes yet more elevating, the thoughts of Florence, that Lord Vargrave was announced; and Lumley Ferrers, who had now succeeded to that title, entered the room. It was the first time that Florence had seen him since the death of his uncle,—the first time Maltravers had seen him since the evening so fatal to Florence. Both started; Maltravers rose and walked to the window. Lord Vargrave took the hand of his cousin and pressed it to his lips in silence, while his looks betokened feelings that for once were genuine.

“You see, Lumley, I am resigned,” said Florence, with a sweet smile; “I am resigned and happy.”

Lumley glanced at Maltravers, and met a cold, scrutinizing, piercing eye, from which he shrank with some confusion. He recovered himself in an instant.

“I am rejoiced, my cousin, I *am* rejoiced,” said he, very

earnestly, "to see Maltravers here again. Let us now hope the best."

Maltravers walked deliberately up to Lumley. "Will you take my hand *now* too?" said he, with deep meaning in his tone.

"More willingly than ever," said Lumley; and he did not shrink as he said it.

"I am satisfied," replied Maltravers, after a pause, and in a voice that expressed more than his words.

There is in some natures so great a hoard of generosity that it often dulls their acuteness. Maltravers could not believe that frankness could be wholly a mask,—it was an hypocrisy he knew not of. He himself was not incapable, had circumstances so urged him, of great crimes,—nay, the design of one crime lay at that moment deadly and dark within his heart; for he had some passions which in so resolute a character could produce, should the wind waken them into storm, dire and terrible effects. Even at the age of thirty it was yet uncertain whether Ernest Maltravers might become an exemplary or an evil man. But he could sooner have strangled a foe than taken the hand of a man whom he had once betrayed.

"I love to think you friends," said Florence, gazing at them affectionately, "and to you, at least, Lumley, such friendship should be a blessing. I always loved you much and dearly, Lumley,—loved you as a brother, though our characters often jarred."

Lumley winced. "For Heaven's sake," he cried, "do not speak thus tenderly to me; I cannot bear it, and look on you and think—"

"That I am dying. Kind words become us best when our words are approaching to the last. But enough of this. I grieved for your loss."

"My poor uncle!" said Lumley, eagerly changing the conversation,— "the shock was sudden; and melancholy duties have absorbed me so till this day that I could not come even to you. It soothed me, however, to learn, in answer to my daily inquiries, that Ernest was here. For my part," he

added, with a faint smile, "I have had duties as well as honours devolved on me. I am left guardian to an heiress, and betrothed to a child."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, my poor uncle was so fondly attached to his wife's daughter that he has left her the bulk of his property; a very small estate, not two thousand pounds a year, goes with the title,—a new title, too, which requires twice as much to carry it off and make its pinchbeck pass for gold. In order, however, to serve a double purpose,—secure to his *protégée* his own beloved peerage, and atone to his nephew for the loss of wealth,—he has left it a last request that I should marry the young lady, over whom I am appointed guardian, when she is eighteen. Alas! I shall then be at the other side of forty! If she does not take to so mature a bridegroom, she loses thirty—only thirty—of the two hundred thousand pounds settled upon her, which goes to me as a sugar-plum after the nauseous draught of the young lady's 'No.' Now you know all. His widow, really an exemplary young woman, has a jointure of fifteen hundred pounds a year and the villa. It is not much, but she is contented."

The lightness of the new peer's tone revolted Maltravers, and he turned impatiently away. But Lord Vargrave, resolving not to suffer the conversation to glide back to sorrowful subjects, which he always hated, turned round to Ernest and said: "Well, my dear Ernest, I see by the papers that you are to have N——'s late appointment: it is a very rising office; I congratulate you."

"I have refused," said Maltravers, dryly.

"Bless me! Indeed, why?"

Ernest bit his lip and frowned; but his glance wandering unconsciously at Florence, Lumley thought he detected the true reply to his question, and became mute.

The conversation was afterwards embarrassed and broken up; Lumley went away as soon as he could, and Lady Florence that night had a severe fit, and could not leave her bed the next day. That confinement she had struggled against to the last; and now, day by day, it grew more frequent and

inevitable. The steps of Death became accelerated, and Lord Saxingham, wakened at last to the mournful truth, took his place by his daughter's side, and forgot that he was a Cabinet minister.

CHAPTER VII.

AWAY, my friends ; why take such pains to know

What some brave marble soon in church shall show ! — CRABBE.

It may seem strange, but Maltravers had never loved Lady Florence as he did now. Was it the perversity of human nature, that makes the things of mortality dearer to us in proportion as they fade from our hopes, like birds whose hues are only unfolded when they take wing and vanish amidst the skies; or was it that he had ever doted more on loveliness of mind than that of form, and the first bloomed out the more, the more the last decayed? A thing to protect, to soothe, to shelter,—oh, how dear it is to the pride of man! The haughty woman who can stand alone and requires no leaning-place in our heart, loses the spell of her sex.

I pass over those stages of decline gratuitously painful to record, and which in this case mine cannot be the cold and technical hand to trace. At length came that time when physicians could define within a few days the final hour of release. And latterly the mocking pruderies of rank had been laid aside, and Maltravers had, for some hours at least in the day, taken his watch beside the couch to which the admired and brilliant Florence Lascelles was now almost constantly reduced. But her high and heroic spirit was with her to the last. To the last she could endure love and hope. One day, when Maltravers left his post, she besought him, with more solemnity than usual, to return that evening. She fixed the precise hour, and she sighed heavily when he departed. Maltravers paused in the hall to speak to the physician, who was

just quitting Lord Saxingham's library. Ernest spoke to him for some moments calmly, and when he heard the fiat, he betrayed no other emotion than a slight quiver of the lip. "I must not weep for her yet," he muttered, as he turned from the door. He went thence to the house of a gentleman of his own age, with whom he had formed that kind of acquaintance which never amounts to familiar friendship, but rests upon mutual respect, and is often more ready than professed friendship itself to confer mutual service. Colonel Danvers was a man who usually sat next to Maltravers in parliament; they voted together, and thought alike on principles both of politics and honour; they would have lent thousands to each other without bond or memorandum; and neither ever wanted a warm and indignant advocate when he was abused behind his back in the presence of the other. Yet their tastes and ordinary habits were not congenial, and when they met in the streets, they never said, as they would to companions they esteemed less, "Let us spend the day together." Such forms of acquaintance are not uncommon among honorable men who have already formed habits and pursuits of their own which they cannot surrender even to friendship. Colonel Danvers was not at home; they believed he was at his club, of which Ernest also was a member. Thither Maltravers bent his way. On arriving, he found that Danvers had been at the club an hour ago, and left word that he should shortly return. Maltravers entered and quietly sat down. The room was full of its daily loungers; but he did not shrink from, he did not even heed, the crowd. He felt not the desire of solitude,—there was solitude enough within him. Several distinguished public men were there, grouped around the fire, and many of the hangers-on and satellites of political life; they were talking with eagerness and animation, for it was a season of great party conflict. Strange as it may seem, though Maltravers was then scarcely sensible of their conversation, it all came back vividly and faithfully on him afterwards, in the first hours of reflection on his own future plans, and served to deepen and consolidate his disgust of the world. They were discussing the character of a great statesman whom, warmed

but by the loftiest and purest motives, they were unable to understand. Their gross suspicions, their coarse jealousies, their calculations of patriotism by place, all that strips the varnish from the face of that fair harlot, Political Ambition, sank like caustic into his spirit. A gentleman seeing him sit silent, with his hat over his moody brows, civilly extended to him the paper he was reading.

"It is the second edition; you will find the last French express."

"Thank you," said Maltravers; and the civil man started as he heard the brief answer, there was something so inexpressibly prostrate and broken-spirited in the voice that uttered it.

Maltravers's eyes fell mechanically on the columns, and caught his own name. That work which, in the fair retirement of Temple Grove, it had so pleased him to compose, — in every page and every thought of which Florence had been consulted, which was so inseparably associated with her image, and glorified by the light of her kindred genius, was just published. It had been completed long since; but the publisher had, for some excellent reason of the craft, hitherto delayed its appearance. Maltravers knew nothing of its publication; he had meant, after his return to town, to send to forbid its appearance; but his thoughts of late had crushed everything else out of his memory, — he had forgotten its existence. And now, in all the pomp and parade of authorship, it was sent into the world; *now, now*, when it was like an indecent mockery of the Bed of Death, — a sacrilege, an impiety! There is a terrible disconnection between the author and the man, — the author's life and the man's life; the eras of visible triumph may be those of the most intolerable, though unrevealed and un conjectured, anguish. The book that delighted us to compose may first appear in the hour when all things under the sun are joyless. This had been Ernest Maltravers's most favoured work. It had been conceived in a happy hour of great ambition; it had been executed with that desire of truth which in the mind of genius becomes ART. How little in the solitary hours stolen from

sleep had he thought of self and that labourer's hire called "fame;" how had he dreamed that he was promulgating secrets to make his kind better and wiser and truer to the great aims of life! How had Florence, and Florence alone, understood the beatings of his heart in every page! *And now!* It so chanced that the work was reviewed in the paper he read; it was not only a hostile criticism, it was a personally abusive diatribe, a virulent invective. All the motives that can darken or defile were ascribed to him. All the mean spite of some mean mind was sputtered forth. Had the writer known the awful blow that awaited Maltravers at that time, it is not in man's nature but that he would have shrunk from this petty gall upon the wrung withers; but, as I have said, there is a terrible disconnection between the author and the man. The first is always at our mercy; of the last we know nothing. At such an hour Maltravers could feel none of the contempt that proud, none of the wrath that vain, minds feel at these stings. He could feel nothing but an undefined abhorrence of the world, and of the aims and objects he had pursued so long. Yet that even he did not *then* feel. He was in a dream; but as men remember dreams, so when he awoke did he loathe his own former aspirations, and sicken at their base rewards. It was the first time since his first year of inexperienced authorship that abuse had had the power even to vex him for a moment. But here, when the cup was already full, was the drop that overflowed. The great column of his past world was gone, and all else seemed crumbling away.

At length Colonel Danvers entered. Maltravers drew him aside, and they left the club.

"Danvers," said the latter, "the time in which I told you I should need your services is near at hand; let me see you, if possible, to-night."

"Certainly; I shall be at the House till eleven. After that hour you will find me at home."

"I thank you."

"Cannot this matter be arranged amicably?"

"No, it is a quarrel of life and death."

"Yet the world is really growing too enlightened for these old mimicries of single combat."

"There are some cases in which human nature and its deep wrongs will be ever stronger than the world and its philosophy. Duels and wars belong to the same principle,—both are sinful on light grounds and poor pretexts. But it is not sinful for a soldier to defend his country from invasion, nor for man, with a man's heart, to vindicate truth and honour with his life. The robber that asks me for money I am allowed to shoot. Is the robber that tears from me treasures never to be replaced, to go free? These are the inconsistencies of a pseudo-ethics, which, as long as we are made of flesh and blood, we can never subscribe to."

"Yet the ancients," said Danvers, with a smile, "were as passionate as ourselves, and they dispensed with duels."

"Yes, because they resorted to assassination!" answered Maltravers, with a gloomy frown. "As in revolutions all law is suspended, so are there stormy events and mighty injuries in life which are as revolutions to individuals. Enough of this; it is no time to argue like the Schoolmen. When we meet you shall know all, and you will judge like me. Good-day!"

"What, are you going already? Maltravers, you look ill, your hand is feverish; you should take advice."

Maltravers smiled,—but the smile was not like his own,—shook his head, and strode rapidly away.

Three of the London clocks, one after the other, had told the hour of nine as a tall and commanding figure passed up the street towards Saxingham House. Five doors before you reach that mansion there is a crossing, and at this spot stood a young man, in whose face youth itself looked sapless and blasted. It was then March,—the third of March; the weather was unusually severe and biting, even for that angry month. There had been snow in the morning, and it lay white and dreary in various ridges along the street. But the wind was not still in the keen but quiet sharpness of frost; on the contrary, it howled almost like a hurricane through the desolate thoroughfares, and the lamps flickered unsteadily in the turbulent gusts. Perhaps it was these blasts which increased the haggardness of aspect in the young man I have mentioned.

His hair, which was much longer than is commonly worn, was tossed wildly from cheeks preternaturally shrunken, hollow, and livid; and the frail, thin form seemed scarcely able to support itself against the rush of the winds.

As the tall figure, which, in its masculine stature and proportions, and a peculiar and nameless grandeur of bearing, strongly contrasted that of the younger man, now came to the spot where the streets met, it paused abruptly.

"You are here once more, Castruccio Cesarini; it is well!" said the low but ringing voice of Ernest Maltravers. "This, I believe, will not be our last interview to-night."

"I ask you, sir," said Cesarini, in a tone in which pride struggled with emotion,— "I ask you to tell me how she is; whether you know — I cannot speak —"

"Your work is nearly done," answered Maltravers. "A few hours more, and your victim — for she is yours — will bear her tale to the Great Judgment-seat. Murderer as you are, tremble, for your own hour approaches!"

"She dies, and I cannot see her! And you are permitted that last glimpse of human perfectness,—*you*, who never loved her as I did; you, hated and detested; you —"

Cesarini paused, and his voice died away, choked in his own convulsive gaspings for breath.

Maltravers looked at him from the height of his erect and lofty form, with a merciless eye; for in this one quarter, Maltravers had shut out pity from his soul.

"Weak criminal," said he, "hear me. You received at my hands forbearance, friendship, fostering and anxious care. When your own follies plunged you into penury, mine was the unseen hand that plucked you from famine or the prison. I strove to redeem and save and raise you, and endow your miserable spirit with the thirst and the power of honour and independence. The agent of that wish was Florence Lascelles. You repaid us well! — a base and fraudulent forgery, attaching meanness to me, fraught with agony and death to her. Your conscience at last smote you; you revealed to her your crime,—one spark of manhood made you reveal it also to myself. Fresh as I was in that moment from the con-

temptation of the ruin you had made, I curbed the impulse that would have crushed the life from your bosom. I told you to live on while life was left to *her*. If she recovered, I could forgive; if she died, I must avenge. We entered into that solemn compact, and in a few hours the bond will need the seal: it is the blood of one of us. Castruccio Cesarini, there is justice in Heaven. Deceive yourself not; you will fall by my hand. When the hour comes, you will hear from me. Let me pass; I have no more now to say."

Every syllable of this speech was uttered with that thrilling distinctness which seems as if the depth of the heart spoke in the voice. But Cesarini did not appear to understand its import. He seized Maltravers by the arm, and looked in his face with a wild and menacing glare.

"Did you tell me she was dying?" he said. "I ask you that question: why do you not answer me? Oh, by the way, you threaten me with your vengeance! Know you not that I long to meet you front to front, and to the death? Did I not tell you so? Did I not try to move your slow blood,—to insult you into a conflict in which I should have gloried? Yet then you were marble."

"Because *my* wrong I could forgive; and *hers*—there was then a hope that *hers* might not need the atonement. Away!"

Maltravers shook the hold of the Italian from his arm, and passed on. A wild, sharp yell of despair rang after him and echoed in his ear as he strode the long, dim, solitary stairs that led to the death-bed of Florence Lascelles.

Maltravers entered the room adjoining that which contained the sufferer,—the same room, still gay and cheerful, in which had been his first interview with Florence since their reconciliation.

Here he found the physician dozing in a *fauteuil*. Lady Florence had fallen asleep during the last two or three hours. Lord Saxingham was in his own apartment, deeply and noisily affected; for it was not thought that Florence could survive the night.

Maltravers sat himself quietly down. Before him, on a table, lay several manuscript books, gayly and gorgeously

bound; he mechanically opened them. Florence's fair, noble Italian characters met his eye in every page. Her rich and active mind, her love for poetry, her thirst for knowledge, her indulgence of deep thought, spoke from those pages like the ghosts of herself. Often, underscored with the marks of her approbation, he chanced upon extracts from his own works, sometimes upon reflections by the writer herself, not inferior in truth and depth to his own; snatches of wild verse never completed, but of a power and energy beyond the delicate grace of lady-poets; brief, vigorous criticisms on books, above the common holiday studies of the sex; indignant and sarcastic aphorisms on the real world, with high and sad bursts of feeling upon the ideal one,—all, checkering and enriching the various volumes, told of the rare gifts with which this singular girl was endowed; a herbal, as it were, of withered blossoms that might have borne Hesperian fruits. And sometimes in these outpourings of the full mind and laden heart were allusions to himself, so tender and so touching,—the pencilled outline of his features, traced by memory in a thousand aspects; the reference to former interviews and conversations, the dates and hours marked with a woman's minute and treasuring care! All these tokens of genius and of love spoke to him with a voice that said: "And this creature is lost to you forever; you never appreciated her till the time for her departure was irrevocably fixed!"

Maltravers uttered a deep groan; all the past rushed over him,—her romantic passion for one yet unknown; her interest in his glory; her zeal for his life of life, his spotless and haughty name. It was as if with her, Fame and Ambition were dying also, and henceforth nothing but common clay and sordid motives were to be left on earth.

How sudden, how awfully sudden, had been the blow! True, there had been an absence of some months, in which the change had operated. But absence is a blank, a nonentity. He had left her in apparent health, in the tide of prosperity and pride. He saw her again, stricken down in body and temper, chastened, humbled, dying. And this being, so bright and lofty, how had she loved him! Never had he been

so loved, except in that morning dream, haunted by the vision of the lost and dim-remembered Alice; never on earth could he be so loved again. The air and aspect of the whole chamber grew to him painful and oppressive. It was full of her, the owner. There the harp, which so well became her muse-like form that it was associated with her like a part of herself; there the pictures, fresh and glowing from her hand,—the grace, the harmony, the classic and simple taste everywhere displayed.

Rousseau has left to us an immortal portrait of the lover waiting for the first embraces of his mistress. But to wait with a pulse as feverish, a brain as dizzy, for her last look; to await the moment of despair, not rapture; to feel the slow and dull time as a palpable load upon the heart, yet to shrink from your own impatience, and wish that the agony of suspense might endure forever,—this, oh, this is a picture of intense passion, of flesh-and-blood reality, of the rare and solemn epochs of our mysterious life, which had been worthier the genius of that "Apostle of Affliction"!

At length the door opened; the favourite attendant of Florence looked in.

"Is Mr. Maltravers there? Oh, sir, my lady is awake and would see you."

Maltravers rose; but his feet were glued to the ground, his sinking heart stood still,—it was a mortal terror that possessed him. With a deep sigh he shook off the numbing spell and passed to the bedside of Florence.

She sat up, propped by pillows, and as he sank beside her, and clasped her wan, transparent hand, she looked at him with a smile of pitying love.

"You have been very, very kind to me," she said, after a pause, and with a voice which had altered even since the last time he heard it. "You have made that part of life from which human nature shrinks with dread, the happiest and the brightest of all my short and vain existence. My own dear Ernest, Heaven reward you!"

A few grateful tears dropped from her eyes, and they fell on the hand which she bent her lips to kiss.

"It was not here, nor amidst the streets and the noisy abodes of anxious, worldly men, nor was it in this harsh and dreary season of the year that I could have wished to look my last on earth. Could I have seen the face of Nature; could I have watched once more with the summer sun amidst those gentle scenes we loved so well,—Death would have had no difference from sleep. But what matters it? With you there are summer and Nature everywhere!"

Maltravers raised his face, and their eyes met in silence; it was a long, fixed gaze, which spoke more than all words could. Her head dropped on his shoulder, and there it lay, passive and motionless, for some moments. A soft step glided into the room,—it was the unhappy father's. He came to the other side of his daughter, and sobbed convulsively.

She then raised herself, and even in the shades of death, a faint blush passed over her cheek.

"My good, dear Father, what comfort will it give you hereafter to think how fondly you spoiled your Florence!"

Lord Saxingham could not answer; he clasped her in his arms and wept over her. Then he broke away, looked on her with a shudder,—

"O God!" he cried, "she is dead, she is dead!"

Maltravers started. The physician kindly approached, and taking Lord Saxingham's hand, led him from the room; he went mute and obedient like a child.

But the struggle was not yet past. Florence once more opened her eyes, and Maltravers uttered a cry of joy. But along those eyes the film was darkening rapidly, as still through the mist and shadow they sought the beloved countenance which hung over her, as if to breathe life into waning life. Twice her lips moved, but her voice failed her; she shook her head sadly.

Maltravers hastily held to her mouth a cordial which lay ready on the table near her; but scarce had it moistened her lips when her whole frame grew heavier and heavier in his clasp. Her head once more sank upon his bosom; she thrice gasped wildly for breath; and at length, raising her hand on high, life struggled into its expiring ray,—

"*There* — above! — Ernest — that name — Ernest!"

Yes, that name was the last she uttered; she was evidently conscious of that thought, for a smile, as her voice again faltered, — a smile sweet and serene; that smile never seen but on the faces of the dying and the dead, borrowed from a light that is not of this world, — settled slowly on her brow, her lips, her whole countenance. Still she breathed, but the breath grew fainter; at length, without murmur, sound, or struggle, it passed away, the head dropped from his bosom, the form fell from his arms; all was over.

CHAPTER VIII.

Is this the promised end? — Lear.

It was two hours after that scene before Maltravers left the house. It was then just on the stroke of the first hour of morning. To him while he walked through the streets, and the sharp winds howled on his path, it was as if a strange and wizard life had passed into and supported him, — a sort of drowsy, dull existence. He was like a sleep-walker, unconscious of all around him, yet his steps went safe and free; and the one thought that possessed his being, into which all intellect seemed shrunk, — the thought, not fiery nor vehement, but calm, stern, and solemn, the thought of revenge, — seemed, as it were, grown his soul itself. He arrived at the door of Colonel Danvers, mounted the stairs, and as his friend advanced to meet him, said calmly, "Now, then, the hour has arrived."

"But what would you do now?"

"Come with me, and you shall learn."

"Very well, my carriage is below. Will you direct the servants?"

Maltravers nodded, gave his orders to the careless footman, and the two friends were soon driving through the less-known and courtly regions of the giant city. It was then that Mal-

travers concisely stated to Danvers the fraud that had been practised by Cesarini.

"You will go with me now," concluded Maltravers, "to his house. To do him justice, he is no coward; he has not shrunk from giving me his address, nor will he shrink from the atonement I demand. I shall wait below while you arrange our meeting,— at daybreak for to-morrow."

Danvers was astonished and even appalled by the discovery made to him. There was something so unusual and strange in the whole affair. But neither his experience nor his principles of honour could suggest any alternative to the plan proposed; for though not regarding the cause of quarrel in the same light as Maltravers, and putting aside all question as to the right of the latter to constitute himself the champion of the betrothed or the avenger of the dead, it seemed clear to the soldier that a man whose confidential letter had been garbled by another for the purpose of slandering his truth and calumniating his name, had no option but contempt, or the sole retribution (wretched though it be) which the customs of the higher class permit to those who live within its pale. But contempt for a wrong that a sorrow so tragic had followed,— was *that* option in human philosophy?

The carriage stopped at a door in a narrow lane in an obscure suburb. Yet dark as all the houses around were, lights were seen in the upper windows of Cesarini's residence, passing to and fro; and scarce had the servant's loud knock echoed through the dim thoroughfare, ere the door was opened. Danvers descended and entered the passage: "Oh, sir, I am so glad you are come!" said an old woman, pale and trembling; "he do take on so!"

"There is no mistake," asked Danvers, halting,— "an Italian gentleman named Cesarini lodges here?"

"Yes, sir, poor cretur. I sent for you to come to him; for, says I to my boy, says I —"

"Whom do you take me for?"

"Why, la, sir, you be's the doctor, be n't you?"

Danvers made no reply. He had a mean opinion of the courage of one who could act dishonourably; he thought there

was some design to cheat his friend out of his revenge; accordingly, he ascended the stairs, motioning the woman to precede him.

He came back to the door of the carriage in a few minutes. "Let us go home, Maltravers," said he; "this man is not in a state to meet you."

"Ha!" cried Maltravers, frowning darkly, and all his long-smothered indignation rushing like fire through every vein of his body, "would he shrink from the atonement?" He pushed Danvers impatiently aside, leaped from the carriage, and rushed upstairs.

Danvers followed.

Heated, wrought-up, furious, Ernest Maltravers burst into a small and squalid chamber, from the closed doors of which, through many chinks, had gleamed the light that told him Cesarini was within. And Cesarini's eyes, blazing with horrible fire, were the first object that met his gaze. Maltravers stood still, as if frozen into stone.

"Ha! ha!" laughed a shrill and shrieking voice, which contrasted dreadfully with the accents of the soft Tuscan in which the wild words were strung, "who comes here with garments dyed in blood? You cannot accuse me, for *my* blow drew no blood, it went straight to the heart, it tore no flesh by the way; we Italians poison our victims! Where art thou, where art thou, Maltravers? I am ready. Coward, you do not come! Oh, yes, yes, here you are! The pistols,—I will not fight so. I am a wild beast. Let us rend each other with our teeth and talons!"

Huddled up like a heap of confused and jointless limbs in the farthest corner of the room lay the wretch, a raving maniac,—two men keeping their firm gripe on him, which ever and anon, with the mighty strength of madness, he shook off, to fall back senseless and exhausted; his strained and bloodshot eyes starting from their sockets, the slaver gathering round his lips, his raven hair standing on end, his delicate and symmetrical features distorted into a hideous and Gorgon aspect. It was, indeed, an appalling and sublime spectacle, full of an awful moral,—the meeting of the foes!

Here stood Maltravers, strong beyond the common strength of men, in health, power, conscious superiority, premeditated vengeance; wise, gifted; all his faculties ripe, developed, at his command; the complete and all-armed man, prepared for defence and offence against every foe,—a man who, once roused in a righteous quarrel, would not have quailed before an army; and there and thus was his dark and fierce purpose dashed from his soul, shivered into atoms at his feet. He felt the nothingness of man and man's wrath in the presence of the madman on whose head the thunderbolt of a greater curse than human anger ever breathes had fallen. In his horrible affliction the Criminal triumphed over the Avenger!

"Yes, yes," shouted Cesarini again, "they tell me she is dying; but he is by her side. Pluck him thence; he shall not touch her hand,—she shall not bless him; she is mine. If I killed her, I have saved her from him; she is mine in death. Let me in, I say; I will come in,—I will, I will see her, and strangle him at her feet." With that, by a tremendous effort he tore himself from the clutch of his holders, and with a sudden and exultant bound sprang across the room and stood face to face with Maltravers. The proud, brave man turned pale and recoiled a step. "It is he, it is he!" shrieked the maniac, and he leaped like a tiger at the throat of his rival. Maltravers quickly seized his arm, and whirled him round. Cesarini fell heavily on the floor, mute, senseless, and in strong convulsions.

"Mysterious Providence," murmured Maltravers, "thou hast justly rebuked the mortal for dreaming he might arrogate to himself thy privilege of vengeance! Forgive the sinner, O God, as I do,—as thou teachest this stubborn heart to forgive; as she forgave who is now with thee, a blessed saint in heaven!"

When, some minutes afterwards, the doctor who had been sent for arrived, the head of the stricken patient lay on the lap of his foe, and it was the hand of Maltravers that wiped the froth from the white lips, and the voice of Maltravers that strove to soothe, and the tears of Maltravers that were falling on that fiery brow.

"Tend him, sir, tend him as my brother," said Maltravers, hiding his face as he resigned the charge. "Let him have all that can alleviate and cure. Remove him hence to some fitter abode; send for the best advice. Restore him, and — and —" He could say no more, but left the room abruptly.

It was afterwards ascertained that Cesarini had remained in the streets after his short interview with Ernest; that at length he had knocked at Lord Saxingham's door just in the very hour when death had claimed its victim. He heard the announcement, he sought to force his way upstairs; they thrust him from the house, and nothing more of him was known till he arrived at his own door, an hour before Danvers and Maltravers came, in raging frenzy. Perhaps by one of the dim, erratic gleams of light which always checker the darkness of insanity, he retained some faint remembrance of his compact and assignation with Maltravers, which had happily guided his steps back to his abode.

It was two months after this scene, a lovely Sabbath morning, in the earliest May, as Lumley, Lord Vargrave, sat alone by the window in his late uncle's villa, in his late uncle's easy-chair; his eyes were resting musingly on the green lawn on which the windows opened, or rather on two forms that were seated upon a rustic bench in the middle of the sward. One was the widow in her weeds, the other was that fair and lovely child destined to be the bride of the new lord. The hands of the mother and daughter were clasped each in each. There was sadness in the faces of both,—deeper, if more resigned, on that of the elder; for the child sought to console her parent, and grief in childhood comes with a butterfly's wing.

Lumley gazed on them both, and on the child more earnestly.

"She is very lovely," he said; "she will be very rich. After all, I am not to be pitied. I am a peer, and I have enough to live upon at present. I am a rising man,—our party want peers; and though I could not have had more than a subaltern's seat at the Treasury Board six months ago, when I was

an active, zealous, able commoner, now that I am a lord, with what they call a stake in the country, I may open my mouth and — bless me, I know not how many windfalls may drop in! My uncle was wiser than I thought in wrestling for this peerage which he won and I wear! Then, by and by, just at the age when I want to marry and have an heir (and a pretty wife saves one a vast deal of trouble), two hundred thousand pounds and a young beauty! Come, come, I have strong cards in my hands, if I play them tolerably. I must take care that she falls desperately in love with me. Leave me alone for that; I know the sex, and have never failed except in — Ah, that poor Florence! Well, it is no use regretting! Like thrifty artists, we must paint out the unmarketable picture, and call luckier creations to fill up the same canvas!”

Here the servant interrupted Lord Vargrave’s meditation by bringing in the letters and the newspapers which had just been forwarded from his town house. Lord Vargrave had spoken in the Lords on the previous Friday, and he wished to see what the Sunday newspapers said of his speech. So he took up one of the leading papers before he opened the letters. His eyes rested upon two paragraphs in close neighbourhood with each other; the first ran thus: —

“The celebrated Mr. Maltravers has abruptly resigned his seat for the — of —, and left town yesterday on an extended tour on the Continent. Speculation is busy on the causes of the singular and unexpected self-exile of a gentleman so distinguished, in the very zenith of his career.”

“So, he has given up the game!” muttered Lord Vargrave; “he was never a practical man,— I am glad he is out of the way. But what’s this about myself?”

“We hear that important changes are to take place in the Government. It is said that ministers are at last alive to the necessity of strengthening themselves with new talent. Among other appointments confidently spoken of in the best-informed circles, we learn that Lord Vargrave is to have the place of —. It will be a popular appointment. Lord Vargrave is not a holiday orator, a mere declamatory rhetorician, but a man of clear, business-like views, and was highly thought of in the House of Commons. He has also the art of attaching

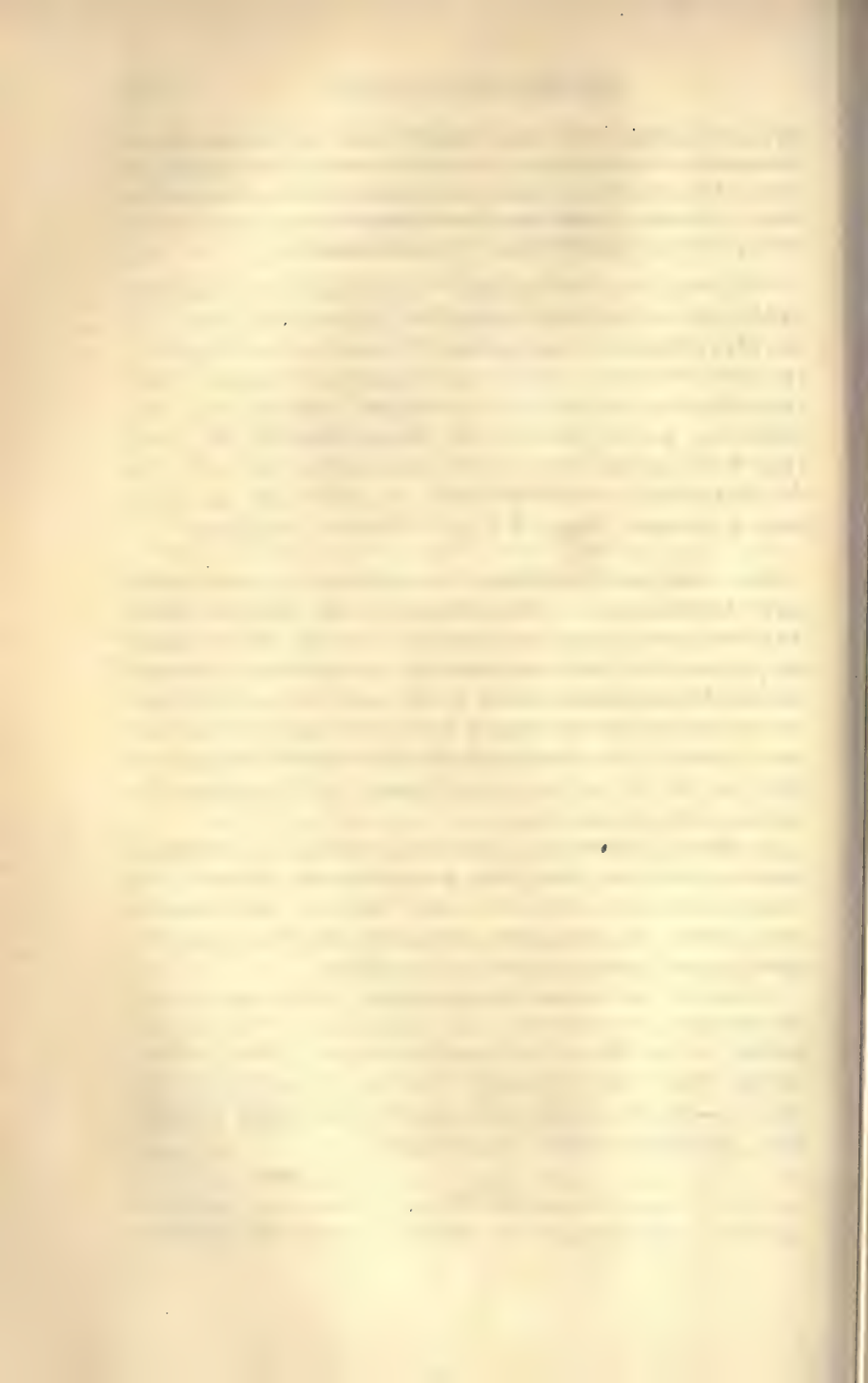
his friends ; and his frank, manly character cannot fail to have its due effect with the English public. In another column of our journal our readers will see a full report of his excellent maiden speech in the House of Lords on Friday last ; the sentiments there expressed do the highest honour to his lordship's patriotism and sagacity."

"Very well, very well indeed!" said Lumley, rubbing his hands; and turning to his letters, his attention was drawn to one with a enormous seal, marked "Private and confidential." He knew before he opened it that it contained the offer of the appointment alluded to in the newspaper. He read, and rose exultantly; passing through the French windows, he joined Lady Vargrave and Evelyn on the lawn, and as he smiled on the mother and caressed the child, the scene and the group made a pleasant picture of English domestic happiness.

Here ends the First Portion of this work; it ends in the view that bounds us when we look on the practical world with the outward, unspiritual eye, and see life that dissatisfies justice,—for life is so seen but in fragments. The influence of Fate seems so small on the man who in erring but errs as the egoist, and shapes out of ill some use that can profit himself. But Fate hangs a shadow so vast on the heart that errs but in venturing, and knows only in others the sources of sorrow and joy.

Go alone, O Maltravers, unfriended, remote, thy present a waste, and thy past life a ruin, go forth to the future! Go, Ferrers, light cynic, with the crowd take thy way, complacent, elated, no cloud upon conscience, for thou seest but sunshine on fortune, go forth to the future!

Human life is compared to the circle. Is the simile just? All lines that are drawn from the centre to touch the circumference, by the law of the circle, are equal. But the lines that are drawn from the heart of the man to the verge of his destiny,—do they equal each other? Alas! some seem so brief, and some lengthen on as forever.



ALICE; OR, THE MYSTERIES



ALICE; OR, THE MYSTERIES

BOOK I.

Σὲ τὰν ἐναυλοῖς ὑπὸ δειδροκόμοις

. . . ἀναβόσσω. — EURIPIDES : *Hel.* 1. 1116.

“Thee, hid the bowering vales amidst, I call.”

CHAPTER I.

Who art thou, fair one, who usurp'st the place
Of Blanch, the lady of the matchless grace ? — LAMB.

It was towards the evening of a day in early April that two ladies were seated by the open windows of a cottage in Devonshire. The lawn before them was gay with evergreens, relieved by the first few flowers and fresh turf of the reviving spring; and at a distance, through an opening amongst the trees, the sea, blue and tranquil, bounded the view, and contrasted the more confined and home-like features of the scene. It was a spot remote, sequestered, shut out from the business and pleasures of the world; as such it suited the tastes and character of the owner.

That owner was the younger of the ladies seated by the window. You would scarcely have guessed, from her appearance, that she was more than seven or eight and twenty, though she exceeded by four or five years that critical boundary in the life of beauty. Her form was slight and delicate in its proportions, nor was her countenance the less lovely because, from its gentleness and repose (not unmixed with a certain sadness) the coarse and the gay might have thought it

wanting in expression. For there is a stillness in the aspect of those who have felt deeply, which deceives the common eye, — as rivers are often alike tranquil and profound, in proportion as they are remote from the springs which agitated and swelled the commencement of their course, and by which their waters are still, though invisibly, supplied.

The elder lady, the guest of her companion, was past seventy; her gray hair was drawn back from the forehead, and gathered under a stiff cap of quaker-like simplicity; while her dress, rich but plain, and of no very modern fashion, served to increase the venerable appearance of one who seemed not ashamed of years.

"My dear Mrs. Leslie," said the lady of the house, after a thoughtful pause in the conversation that had been carried on for the last hour, "it is very true; perhaps I was to blame in coming to this place; I ought not to have been so selfish."

"No, my dear friend," returned Mrs. Leslie, gently; "selfish is a word that can never be applied to you; you acted as became you, — agreeably to your own instinctive sense of what is best when at your age, — independent in fortune and rank, and still so lovely, — you resigned all that would have attracted others, and devoted yourself, in retirement, to a life of quiet and unknown benevolence. You are in your sphere in this village, — humble though it be, — consoling, relieving, healing the wretched, the destitute, the infirm; and teaching your Evelyn insensibly to imitate your modest and Christian virtues." The good old lady spoke warmly, and with tears in her eyes; her companion placed her hand in Mrs. Leslie's.

"You cannot make me vain," said she, with a sweet and melancholy smile. "I remember what I was when you first gave shelter to the poor, desolate wanderer and her fatherless child; and I, who was then so poor and destitute, what should I be, if I was deaf to the poverty and sorrows of others, — others, too, who are better than I am. But now Evelyn, as you say, is growing up; the time approaches when she must decide on accepting or rejecting Lord Vargrave. And yet in this village how can she compare him with others; how can

she form a choice? What you say is very true; and yet I did not think of it sufficiently. What shall I do? I am only anxious, dear girl, to act so as may be best for her own happiness."

"Of that I am sure," returned Mrs. Leslie; "and yet I know not how to advise. On one hand, so much is due to the wishes of your late husband, in every point of view, that if Lord Vargrave be worthy of Evelyn's esteem and affection, it would be most desirable that she should prefer him to all others. But if he be what I hear he is considered in the world, — an artful, scheming, almost heartless man, of ambitious and hard pursuits, — I tremble to think how completely the happiness of Evelyn's whole life may be thrown away. She certainly is not in love with him, and yet I fear she is one whose nature is but too susceptible of affection. She ought now to see others, — to know her own mind, and not to be hurried, blindfold and inexperienced, into a step that decides existence. This is a duty we owe to her, — nay, even to the late Lord Vargrave, anxious as he was for the marriage. His aim was surely her happiness, and he would not have insisted upon means that time and circumstances might show to be contrary to the end he had in view."

"You are right," replied Lady Vargrave. "When my poor husband lay on his bed of death, just before he summoned his nephew to receive his last blessing, he said to me, 'Providence can counteract all our schemes. If ever it should be for Evelyn's real happiness that my wish for her marriage with Lumley Ferrers should not be fulfilled, to you I must leave the right to decide on what I cannot foresee. All I ask is that no obstacle shall be thrown in the way of my wish; and that the child shall be trained up to consider Lumley as her future husband.' Among his papers was a letter addressed to me to the same effect; and, indeed, in other respects that letter left more to my judgment than I had any right to expect. Oh, I am often unhappy to think that he did not marry one who would have deserved his affection! and — but regret is useless now."

"I wish you could really feel so," said Mrs. Leslie; "for

regret of another kind still seems to haunt you; and I do not think you have yet forgotten your early sorrows."

"Ah, how can I?" said Lady Vargrave, with a quivering lip.

At that instant, a light shadow darkened the sunny lawn in front of the casements, and a sweet, gay young voice was heard singing at a little distance; a moment more, and a beautiful girl, in the first bloom of youth, bounded lightly along the grass, and halted opposite the friends.

It was a remarkable contrast, — the repose and quiet of the two persons we have described, the age and gray hairs of one, the resigned and melancholy gentleness written on the features of the other — with the springing step and laughing eyes and radiant bloom of the new comer! As she stood with the setting sun glowing full upon her rich fair hair, her happy countenance and elastic form, it was a vision almost too bright for this weary earth, — a thing of light and bliss, that the joyous Greek might have placed among the forms of Heaven, and worshipped as an Aurora or a Hebe.

"Oh, how can you stay indoors this beautiful evening? Come, dearest Mrs. Leslie; come, Mother, dear Mother, you know you promised you would, — you said I was to call you; see, it will rain no more, and the shower has left the myrtles and the violet-bank so fresh."

"My dear Evelyn," said Mrs. Leslie, with a smile, "I am not so young as you."

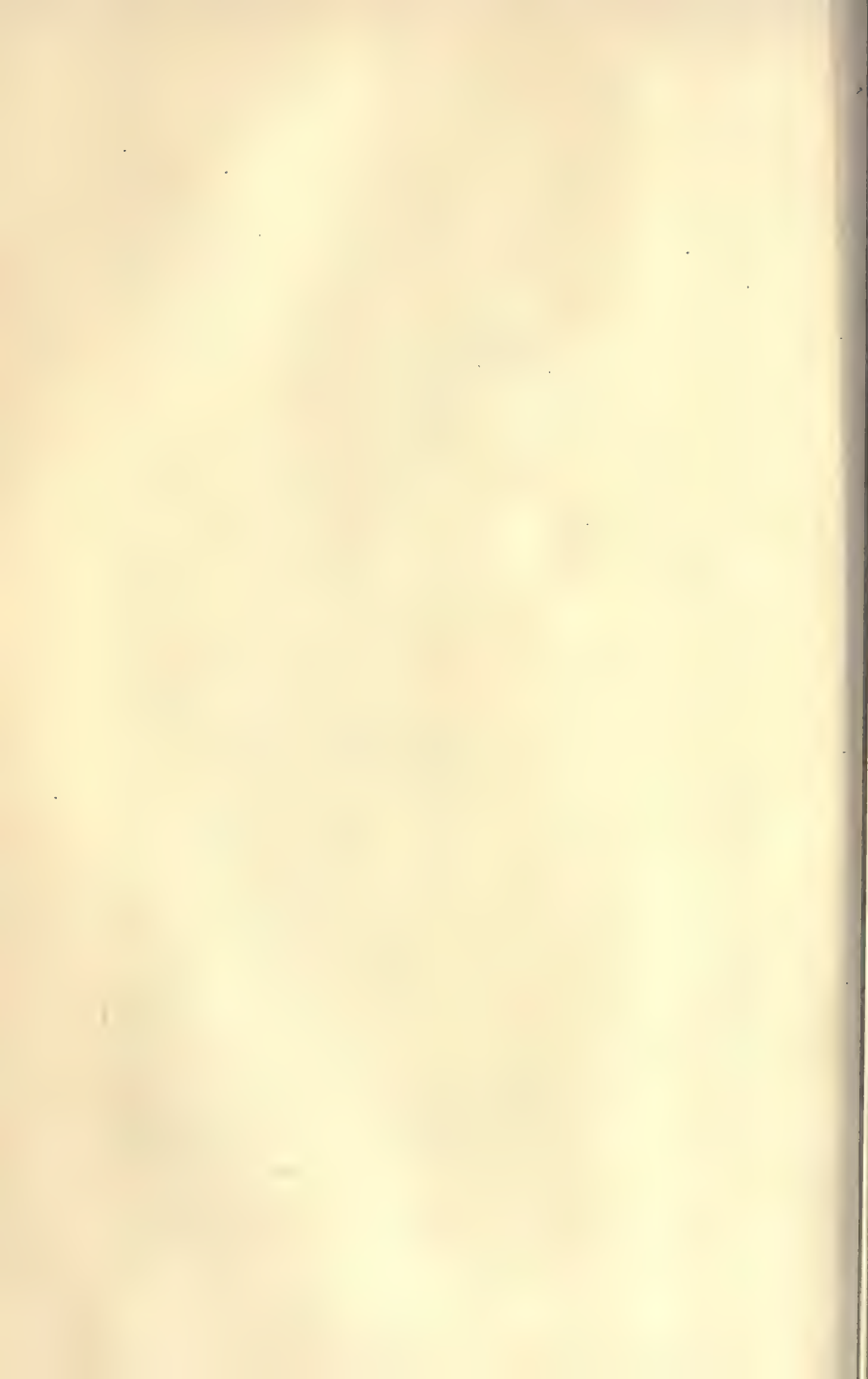
"No; but you are just as gay when you are in good spirits — and who can be out of spirits in such weather? Let me call for your chair; let me wheel you — I am sure I can. Down, Sultan; so you have found me out, have you, sir? Be quiet, sir, down!"

This last exhortation was addressed to a splendid dog of the Newfoundland breed, who now contrived wholly to occupy Evelyn's attention.

The two friends looked at this beautiful girl, as with all the grace of youth she shared while she rebuked the exuberant hilarity of her huge playmate; and the elder of the two seemed the most to sympathize with her mirth. Both gazed



EVELYN AND SULTAN.



with fond affection upon an object dear to both. But some memory or association touched Lady Vargrave, and she sighed as she gazed.

CHAPTER II.

Is stormy life preferred to this serene? — YOUNG : *Satires*.

AND the windows were closed in, and night had succeeded to evening, and the little party at the cottage were grouped together. Mrs. Leslie was quietly seated at her tambour-frame; Lady Vargrave, leaning her cheek on her hand, seemed absorbed in a volume before her, but her eyes were not on the page; Evelyn was busily employed in turning over the contents of a parcel of books and music which had just been brought from the lodge where the London coach had deposited it.

"Oh, dear Mamma!" cried Evelyn, "I am so glad; there is something you will like, — some of the poetry that touched you so much set to music."

Evelyn brought the songs to her mother, who roused herself from her revery, and looked at them with interest.

"It is very strange," said she, "that I should be so affected by all that is written by this person: I, too" (she added, tenderly stroking down Evelyn's luxuriant tresses), "who am not so fond of reading as you are!"

"You are reading one of his books now," said Evelyn, glancing over the open page on the table. "Ah, that beautiful passage upon 'Our First Impressions.' Yet I do not like you, dear Mother, to read his books; they always seem to make you sad."

"There is a charm to me in their thoughts, their manner of expression," said Lady Vargrave, "which sets me thinking, which reminds me of — of an early friend, whom I could fancy I hear talking while I read. It was so from the first time I opened by accident a book of his years ago."

"Who is this author that pleases you so much?" asked Mrs. Leslie, with some surprise; for Lady Vargrave had usually little pleasure in reading even the greatest and most popular masterpieces of modern genius.

"Maltravers," answered Evelyn; "and I think I almost share my mother's enthusiasm."

"Maltravers!" repeated Mrs. Leslie. "He is, perhaps, a dangerous writer for one so young. At your age, dear girl, you have naturally romance and feeling enough of your own without seeking them in books."

"But, dear madam," said Evelyn, standing up for her favourite, "his writings do not consist of romance and feeling only; they are not exaggerated, they are so simple, so truthful."

"Did you ever meet him?" asked Lady Vargrave.

"Yes," returned Mrs. Leslie, "once, when he was a gay, fair-haired boy. His father resided in the next county, and we met at a country-house. Mr. Maltravers himself has an estate near my daughter in B——shire, but he does not live on it; he has been some years abroad, — a strange character!"

"Why does he write no more?" said Evelyn; "I have read his works so often, and know his poetry so well by heart, that I should look forward to something new from him as an event."

"I have heard, my dear, that he has withdrawn much from the world and its objects, — that he has lived greatly in the East. The death of a lady to whom he was to have been married is said to have unsettled and changed his character. Since that event he has not returned to England. Lord Vargrave can tell you more of him than I."

"Lord Vargrave thinks of nothing that is not always before the world," said Evelyn.

"I am sure you wrong him," said Mrs. Leslie, looking up and fixing her eyes on Evelyn's countenance; "for *you* are not before the world."

Evelyn slightly — very slightly — pouted her pretty lip, but made no answer. She took up the music, and seating herself at the piano, practised the airs. Lady Vargrave lis-

tened with emotion; and as Evelyn in a voice exquisitely sweet, though not powerful, sang the words, her mother turned away her face, and half unconsciously, a few tears stole silently down her cheek.

When Evelyn ceased, herself affected, — for the lines were impressed with a wild and melancholy depth of feeling, — she came again to her mother's side, and seeing her emotion, kissed away the tears from the pensive eyes. Her own gayety left her; she drew a stool to her mother's feet, and nestling to her, and clasping her hand, did not leave that place till they retired to rest.

And the lady blessed Evelyn, and felt that, if bereaved, she was not alone.



CHAPTER III.

BUT come, thou Goddess, fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne !

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To hear the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night. — *L'Allegro.*

BUT come, thou Goddess, sage and holy,
Come, divinest Melancholy !

.

There held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble. — *Il Penseroso.*

THE early morn of early spring — what associations of freshness and hope in that single sentence! And there — a little after sunrise — there was Evelyn, fresh and hopeful as the morning itself, bounding with the light step of a light heart over the lawn. Alone, alone! no governess, with a pinched nose and a sharp voice, to curb her graceful movements, and tell her how young ladies ought to walk. How silently morning stole over the earth! It was as if youth had

the day and the world to itself. The shutters of the cottage were still closed, and Evelyn cast a glance upward, to assure herself that her mother, who also rose betimes, was not yet stirring. So she tripped along, singing from very glee, to secure a companion, and let out Sultan; and a few moments afterwards, they were scouring over the grass, and descending the rude steps that wound down the cliff to the smooth sea-sands. Evelyn was still a child at heart, yet somewhat more than a child in mind. In the majesty of —

“That hollow, sounding, and mysterious main,” —

in the silence broken but by the murmur of the billows, in the solitude relieved but by the boats of the early fishermen, she felt those deep and tranquillizing influences which belong to the Religion of Nature. Unconsciously to herself, her sweet face grew more thoughtful, and her step more slow. What a complex thing is education! How many circumstances, that have no connection with books and tutors, contribute to the rearing of the human mind! The earth and the sky and the ocean were among the teachers of Evelyn Cameron; and beneath her simplicity of thought was daily filled, from the turns of invisible spirits, the fountain of the poetry of feeling.

This was the hour when Evelyn most sensibly felt how little our real life is chronicled by external events, — how much we live a second and a higher life in our meditations and dreams. Brought up, not more by precept than example, in the faith which unites creature and Creator, this was the hour in which thought itself had something of the holiness of prayer; and if (turning from dreams divine to earlier visions) this also was the hour in which the heart painted and peopled its own fairyland below, of the two ideal worlds that stretch beyond the inch of time on which we stand, Imagination is perhaps holier than Memory.

So now, as the day crept on, Evelyn returned in a more sober mood, and then she joined her mother and Mrs. Leslie at breakfast; and then the household cares — such as they

were — devolved upon her, heiress though she was; and, that duty done, once more the straw hat and Sultan were in requisition; and opening a little gate at the back of the cottage, she took the path along the village churchyard that led to the house of the old curate. The burial-ground itself was surrounded and shut in with a belt of trees. Save the small time-discoloured church and the roofs of the cottage and the minister's house, no building — not even a cotter's hut — was visible there. Beneath a dark and single yew-tree in the centre of the ground was placed a rude seat; opposite to this seat was a grave, distinguished from the rest by a slight palisade. As the young Evelyn passed slowly by this spot, a glove on the long damp grass beside the yew-tree caught her eye. She took it up and sighed, — it was her mother's. She sighed, for she thought of the soft melancholy on that mother's face which her caresses and her mirth never could wholly chase away. She wondered why that melancholy was so fixed a habit, for the young ever wonder why the experienced should be sad.

And now Evelyn had passed the churchyard, and was on the green turf before the minister's quaint, old-fashioned house.

The old man himself was at work in his garden; but he threw down his hoe as he saw Evelyn, and came cheerfully up to greet her.

It was easy to see how dear she was to him.

"So you are come for your daily lesson, my young pupil?"

"Yes; but Tasso can wait if the —"

"If the tutor wants to play truant; no, my child; and, indeed, the lesson must be longer than usual to-day, for I fear I shall have to leave you to-morrow for some days."

"Leave us! why? — leave Brook-Green — impossible!"

"Not at all impossible; for we have now a new vicar, and I must turn courtier in my old age, and ask him to leave me with my flock. He is at Weymouth, and has written to me to visit him there. So, Miss Evelyn, I must give you a holiday task to learn while I am away."

Evelyn brushed the tears from her eyes — for when the heart is full of affection the eyes easily run over — and clung

mournfully to the old man, as she gave utterance to all her half-childish, half-womanly grief at the thought of parting so soon with him. And what, too, could her mother do without him; and why could he not write to the vicar instead of going to him?

The curate, who was childless and a bachelor, was not insensible to the fondness of his beautiful pupil, and perhaps he himself was a little more *distract* than usual that morning, or else Evelyn was peculiarly inattentive; for certain it is that she reaped very little benefit from the lesson.

Yet he was an admirable teacher, that old man! Aware of Evelyn's quick, susceptible, and rather fanciful character of mind, he had sought less to curb than to refine and elevate her imagination. Himself of no ordinary abilities, which leisure had allowed him to cultivate, his piety was too large and cheerful to exclude literature — Heaven's best gift — from the pale of religion. And under his care Evelyn's mind had been duly stored with the treasures of modern genius, and her judgment strengthened by the criticisms of a graceful and generous taste.

In that sequestered hamlet, the young heiress had been trained to adorn her future station; to appreciate the arts and elegances that distinguish (no matter what the rank) the refined from the low, better than if she had been brought up under the hundred-handed Briareus of fashionable education. Lady Vargrave, indeed, like most persons of modest pretensions and imperfect cultivation, was rather inclined to overrate the advantages to be derived from book-knowledge; and she was never better pleased than when she saw Evelyn opening the monthly parcel from London, and delightedly poring over volumes which Lady Vargrave innocently believed to be reservoirs of inexhaustible wisdom.

But this day Evelyn would not read, and the golden verses of Tasso lost their music to her ear. So the curate gave up the lecture, and placed a little programme of studies to be conned during his absence in her reluctant hand; and Sultan, who had been wistfully licking his paws for the last half-hour, sprang up and caracoled once more into the garden; and the

old priest and the young woman left the works of man for those of Nature.

"Do not fear, I will take such care of your garden while you are away," said Evelyn; "and you must write and let us know what day you are to come back."

"My dear Evelyn, you are born to spoil every one — from Sultan to Aubrey."

"And to be spoilt too, don't forget that," cried Evelyn, laughingly shaking back her ringlets. "And now, before you go, will you tell me, as you are so wise, what I can do to make — to make — my mother love me?"

Evelyn's voice faltered as she spoke the last words, and Aubrey looked surprised and moved.

"Your mother love you, my dear Evelyn! What do you mean, — does she not love you?"

"Ah, not as I love her. She is kind and gentle, I know, for she is so to all; but she does not confide in me, she does not trust me; she has some sorrow at heart which I am never allowed to learn and soothe. Why does she avoid all mention of her early days? She never talks to me as if *she*, too, had once a mother! Why am I never to speak of her first marriage, of my father? Why does she look reproachfully at me, and shun me — yes, shun me, for days together — if — if I attempt to draw her to the past? Is there a secret? If so, am I not old enough to know it?"

Evelyn spoke quickly and nervously, and with quivering lips. Aubrey took her hand, and pressing it, said, after a little pause, —

"Evelyn, this is the first time you have ever thus spoken to me. Has anything chanced to arouse your — shall I call it curiosity, or shall I call it the mortified pride of affection?"

"And you, too, are harsh; you blame me! No, it is true that I have not thus spoken to you before; but I have long, long thought with grief that I was insufficient to my mother's happiness, — I who love her so dearly. And now, since Mrs. Leslie has been here, I find her conversing with this comparative stranger so much more confidentially than with me. When I come in unexpectedly, they cease their conference,

as if I were not worthy to share it; and — and oh, if I could but make you understand that all I desire is that my mother should love me and know me and trust me — ”

“Evelyn,” said the curate, coldly, “you love your mother, and justly; a kinder and a gentler heart than hers does not beat in a human breast. Her first wish in life is for your happiness and welfare. You ask for confidence, but why not confide in her; why not believe her actuated by the best and the tenderest motives; why not leave it to her discretion to reveal to you any secret grief, if such there be, that preys upon her; why add to that grief by any selfish indulgence of over-susceptibility in yourself? My dear pupil, you are yet almost a child; and they who have sorrowed may well be reluctant to sadden with a melancholy confidence those to whom sorrow is yet unknown. This much, at least, I may tell you, — for this much she does not seek to conceal, — that Lady Vargrave was early inured to trials from which you, more happy, have been saved. She speaks not to you of her relations, for she has none left on earth. And after her marriage with your benefactor, Evelyn, perhaps it seemed to her a matter of principle to banish all vain regret, all remembrance if possible, of an earlier tie.”

“My poor, poor mother! Oh, yes, you are right; forgive me. She yet mourns, perhaps, my father, whom I never saw, whom I feel, as it were, tacitly forbid to name, — you did not know him?”

“Him! — whom?”

“My father, my mother’s first husband.”

“No.”

“But I am sure I could not have loved him so well as my benefactor, my real and second father, who is now dead and gone. Oh, how well I remember *him*, — how fondly!” Here Evelyn stopped and burst into tears.

“You do right to remember him thus; to love and revere his memory, — a father indeed he was to you. But now, Evelyn, my own dear child, hear me. Respect the silent heart of your mother; let her not think that her misfortunes, whatever they may be, can cast a shadow over you, — you, her

last hope and blessing. Rather than seek to open the old wounds, suffer them to heal, as they must, beneath the influences of religion and time; and wait the hour when without, perhaps, too keen a grief, your mother can go back with you into the past."

"I will, I will! Oh, how wicked, how ungracious I have been! It was but an excess of love, believe it, dear Mr. Aubrey, believe it."

"I do believe it, my poor Evelyn; and now I know that I may trust in you. Come, dry those bright eyes, or they will think I have been a hard taskmaster, and let us go to the cottage."

They walked slowly and silently across the humble garden into the churchyard, and there, by the old yew-tree, they saw Lady Vargrave. Evelyn, fearful that the traces of her tears were yet visible, drew back; and Aubrey, aware of what passed within her, said, —

"Shall I join your mother, and tell her of my approaching departure? And perhaps in the meanwhile you will call at our poor pensioner's in the village, — Dame Newman is so anxious to see you; we will join you there soon."

Evelyn smiled her thanks, and kissing her hand to her mother with seeming gayety, turned back and passed through the glebe into the little village. Aubrey joined Lady Vargrave, and drew her arm in his.

Meanwhile Evelyn thoughtfully pursued her way. Her heart was full, and of self-reproach. Her mother had, then, known cause for sorrow; and perhaps her reserve was but occasioned by her reluctance to pain her child. Oh, how doubly anxious would Evelyn be hereafter to soothe, to comfort, to wean that dear mother from the past! Though in this girl's character there was something of the impetuosity and thoughtlessness of her years, it was noble as well as soft; and now the woman's trustfulness conquered all the woman's curiosity.

She entered the cottage of the old bedridden crone whom Aubrey had referred to. It was as a gleam of sunshine, — that sweet comforting face; and here, seated by the old

woman's side, with the Book of the Poor upon her lap, Evelyn was found by Lady Vargrave. It was curious to observe the different impressions upon the cottagers made by the mother and daughter. Both were beloved with almost equal enthusiasm; but with the first the poor felt more at home. They could talk to her more at ease: she understood them so much more quickly; they had no need to beat about the bush to tell the little peevish complaints that they were half-ashamed to utter to Evelyn. What seemed so light to the young, cheerful beauty, the mother listened to with so grave and sweet a patience. When all went right, they rejoiced to see Evelyn; but in their little difficulties and sorrows nobody was like "my good Lady!"

So Dame Newman, the moment she saw the pale countenance and graceful shape of Lady Vargrave at the threshold, uttered an exclamation of delight. Now she could let out all that she did not like to trouble the young lady with; now she could complain of east winds, and rheumatiz, and the parish officers, and the bad tea they sold poor people at Mr. Hart's shop, and the ungrateful grandson who was so well to do and who forgot he had a grandmother alive!



CHAPTER IV.

TOWARDS the end of the week we received a card from the town ladies.

Vicar of Wakefield.

THE curate was gone, and the lessons suspended; otherwise — as like each to each as sunshine or cloud permitted — day followed day in the calm retreat of Brook-Green, — when, one morning, Mrs. Leslie, with a letter in her hand, sought Lady Vargrave, who was busied in tending the flowers of a small conservatory which she had added to the cottage, when, from various motives, and one in especial powerful and mysterious,

she exchanged for so sequestered a home the luxurious villa bequeathed to her by her husband.

To flowers—those charming children of Nature, in which our age can take the same tranquil pleasure as our youth—Lady Vargrave devoted much of her monotonous and unchequered time. She seemed to love them almost as living things; and her memory associated them with hours as bright and as fleeting as themselves.

“My dear friend,” said Mrs. Leslie, “I have news for you. My daughter, Mrs. Merton, who has been in Cornwall on a visit to her husband’s mother, writes me word that she will visit us on her road home to the Rectory in B——shire. She will not put you much out of the way,” added Mrs. Leslie, smiling, “for Mr. Merton will not accompany her; she only brings her daughter Caroline, a lively, handsome, intelligent girl, who will be enchanted with Evelyn. All you will regret is, that she comes to terminate my visit, and take me away with her. If you can forgive that offence, you will have nothing else to pardon.”

Lady Vargrave replied with her usual simple kindness; but she was evidently nervous at the visit of a stranger (for she had never yet seen Mrs. Merton), and still more distressed at the thought of losing Mrs. Leslie a week or two sooner than had been anticipated. However, Mrs. Leslie hastened to reassure her. Mrs. Merton was so quiet and good-natured, the wife of a country clergyman with simple tastes; and after all, Mrs. Leslie’s visit might last as long, if Lady Vargrave would be contented to extend her hospitality to Mrs. Merton and Caroline.

When the visit was announced to Evelyn, her young heart was susceptible only of pleasure and curiosity. She had no friend of her own age; she was sure she should like the grandchild of her dear Mrs. Leslie.

Evelyn, who had learned betimes, from the affectionate solicitude of her nature, to relieve her mother of such few domestic cares as a home so quiet, with an establishment so regular, could afford, gayly busied herself in a thousand little preparations. She filled the rooms of the visitors with flowers

(not dreaming that any one could fancy them unwholesome), and spread the tables with her own favourite books, and had the little cottage piano in her own dressing-room removed into Caroline's — Caroline must be fond of music. She had some doubts of transferring a cage with two canaries into Caroline's room also; but when she approached the cage with that intention, the birds chirped so merrily, and seemed so glad to see her, and so expectant of sugar, that her heart smote her for her meditated desertion and ingratitude. No, she could not give up the canaries; but the glass bowl with the goldfish — oh, that would look so pretty on its stand just by the casement; and the fish — dull things! — would not miss her.

The morning, the noon, the probable hour of the important arrival came at last; and after having three times within the last half-hour visited the rooms, and settled and unsettled and settled again everything before arranged, Evelyn retired to her own room to consult her wardrobe, and Margaret, — once her nurse, now her abigail. Alas! the wardrobe of the destined Lady Vargrave — the betrothed of a rising statesman, a new and now an ostentatious peer; the heiress of the wealthy Templeton — was one that many a tradesman's daughter would have disdained. Evelyn visited so little; the clergyman of the place, and two old maids who lived most respectably on a hundred and eighty pounds a year, in a cottage, with one maidservant, two cats, and a footboy, bounded the circle of her acquaintance. Her mother was so indifferent to dress; she herself had found so many other ways of spending money! — but Evelyn was not now more philosophical than others of her age. She turned from muslin to muslin — from the coloured to the white, from the white to the coloured — with pretty anxiety and sorrowful suspense. At last she decided on the newest, and when it was on, and the single rose set in the lustrous and beautiful hair, Carson herself could not have added a charm. Happy age! Who wants the arts of the milliner at seventeen?

"And here, miss; here's the fine necklace Lord Vargrave brought down when my lord came last; it will look so grand!"

The emeralds glittered in their case; Evelyn looked at them irresolutely; then, *as* she looked, a shade came over her forehead, and she sighed, and closed the lid.

"No, Margaret, I do not want it; take it away."

"Oh, dear, miss! what would my lord say if he were down! And they are so beautiful! they will look so fine! Deary me, how they sparkle! But you will wear much finer when you are my lady."

"I hear Mamma's bell; go, Margaret, she wants you."

Left alone, the young beauty sank down abstractedly, and though the looking-glass was opposite, it did not arrest her eye; she forgot her wardrobe, her muslin dress, her fears, and her guests.

"Ah," she thought, "what a weight of dread I feel *here* when I think of Lord Vargrave and this fatal engagement; and every day I feel it more and more. To leave my dear, dear mother, the dear cottage—oh! I never can. I used to like him when I was a child; now I shudder at his name. Why is this? He is kind; he condescends to seek to please. It was the wish of my poor father,—for father he really was to me; and yet—oh that he had left me poor and free!"

At this part of Evelyn's meditation the unusual sound of wheels was heard on the gravel; she started up, wiped the tears from her eyes, and hurried down to welcome the expected guests.

CHAPTER V.

TELL me, Sophy, my dear, what do you think of our new visitors?

Vicar of Wakefield.

MRS. MERTON and her daughter were already in the middle drawing-room, seated on either side of Mrs. Leslie,—the former a woman of quiet and pleasing exterior, her face still handsome, and if not intelligent, at least expressive of sober

good-nature and habitual content; the latter a fine dark-eyed girl, of decided countenance, and what is termed a showy style of beauty, — tall, self-possessed, and dressed plainly indeed, but after the approved fashion. The rich bonnet of the large shape then worn; the Chantilly veil; the gay French *Cachemire*; the full sleeves, at that time the unnatural rage; the expensive yet unassuming *robe de soie*; the perfect *chaussure*; the air of society, the easy manner, the tranquil but scrutinizing gaze, — all startled, discomposed, and half-frightened Evelyn.

Miss Merton herself, if more at her ease, was equally surprised by the beauty and unconscious grace of the young fairy before her, and rose to greet her with a well-bred cordiality, which at once made a conquest of Evelyn's heart.

Mrs. Merton kissed her cheek, and smiled kindly on her, but said little. It was easy to see that she was a less conversable and more homely person than Caroline.

When Evelyn conducted them to their rooms, the mother and daughter detected at a glance the care that had provided for their comforts; and something eager and expectant in Evelyn's eyes taught the good-nature of the one and the good breeding of the other to reward their young hostess by various little exclamations of pleasure and satisfaction.

"Dear, how nice! What a pretty writing-desk!" said one — "And the pretty goldfish!" said the other — "And the piano, too, so well placed;" and Caroline's fair fingers ran rapidly over the keys. Evelyn retired, covered with smiles and blushes. And then Mrs. Merton permitted herself to say to the well-dressed abigail, —

"Do take away those flowers, they make me quite faint."

"And how low the room is, — so confined!" said Caroline, when the lady's lady withdrew with the condemned flowers. "And I see no Pysche. However, the poor people have done their best."

"Sweet person, Lady Vargrave!" said Mrs. Merton, — "so interesting, so beautiful; and how youthful in appearance!"

"No *tournure* — not much the manner of the world," said Caroline.

"No; but something better."

"Hem!" said Caroline. "The girl is very pretty, though too small."

"Such a smile, such eyes, — she is irresistible! and what a fortune! She will be a charming friend for you, Caroline."

"Yes, she may be useful, if she marry Lord Vargrave; or, indeed, if she make any brilliant match. What sort of a man is Lord Vargrave?"

"I never saw him; they say, most fascinating."

"Well, she is very happy," said Caroline, with a sigh.

CHAPTER VI.

Two lovely damsels cheer my lonely walk. — LAMB : *Album Verses*.

AFTER dinner there was still light enough for the young people to stroll through the garden. Mrs. Merton, who was afraid of the damp, preferred staying within; and she was so quiet, and made herself so much at home, that Lady Vargrave, to use Mrs. Leslie's phrase, was not the least "put out" by her. Besides, she talked of Evelyn, and that was a theme very dear to Lady Vargrave, who was both fond and proud of Evelyn.

"This is very pretty indeed, — the view of the sea quite lovely!" said Caroline. "You draw?"

"Yes, a little."

"From Nature?"

"Oh, yes."

"What, in Indian ink?"

"Yes; and water-colours."

"Oh! Why, who could have taught you in this little village; or, indeed, in this most primitive county?"

"We did not come to Brook-Green till I was nearly fifteen. My dear mother, though very anxious to leave our villa at

Fulham, would not do so on my account, while masters could be of service to me; and as I knew she had set her heart on this place, I worked doubly hard."

"Then she knew this place before?"

"Yes; she had been here many years ago, and took the place after my poor father's death, — I always call the late Lord Vargrave my father. She used to come here regularly once a year without me; and when she returned, I thought ~~her~~ even more melancholy than before."

"What makes the charm of the place to Lady Vargrave?" asked Caroline, with some interest.

"I don't know; unless it be its extreme quiet, or some early association."

"And who is your nearest neighbour?"

"Mr. Aubrey, the curate. It is so unlucky, he is gone from home for a short time. You can't think how kind and pleasant he is, — the most amiable old man in the world; just such a man as Bernardin St. Pierre would have loved to describe."

"Agreeable, no doubt, but dull — good curates generally are."

"Dull? not the least; cheerful even to playfulness, and full of information. He has been so good to me about books; indeed, I have learned a great deal from him."

"I dare say he is an admirable judge of sermons."

"But Mr. Aubrey is not severe," persisted Evelyn, earnestly; "he is very fond of Italian literature, for instance; we are reading Tasso together."

"Oh! pity he is old — I think you said he was old. Perhaps there is a son, the image of the sire?"

"Oh, no," said Evelyn, laughing innocently; "Mr. Aubrey never married."

"And where does the old gentleman live?"

"Come a little this way; there, you can just see the roof of his house, close by the church."

"I see; it is *tant soit peu triste* to have the church so near you."

"Do you think so? Ah, but you have not seen it; it is the prettiest church in the county; and the little burial-ground —

so quiet, so shut in; I feel better every time I pass it. Some places breathe of religion."

"You are poetical, my dear little friend."

Evelyn, who *had* poetry in her nature, and therefore sometimes it broke out in her simple language, coloured and felt half-ashamed.

"It is a favourite walk with my mother," said she, apologetically; "she often spends hours there alone: and so, perhaps, I think it a prettier spot than others may. It does not seem to me to have anything of gloom in it; when I die, I should like to be buried there."

Caroline laughed slightly. "That is a strange wish; but perhaps you have been crossed in love?"

"I! — oh, you are laughing at me!"

"You do not remember Mr. Cameron, your real father, I suppose?"

"No; I believe he died before I was born."

"Cameron is a Scotch name: to what tribe of Camerons do you belong?"

"I don't know," said Evelyn, rather embarrassed; "indeed I know nothing of my father's or mother's family. It is very odd, but I don't think we have any relations. You know when I am of age that I am to take the name of Templeton."

"Ah, the name goes with the fortune; I understand. Dear Evelyn, how rich you will be! I do so wish I were rich!"

"And I that I were poor," said Evelyn, with an altered tone and expression of countenance.

"Strange girl! what can you mean?"

Evelyn said nothing, and Caroline examined her curiously.

"These notions come from living so much out of the world, my dear Evelyn. How you must long to see more of life!"

"I! not in the least. I should never like to leave this place, — I could live and die here."

"You will think otherwise when you are Lady Vargrave. Why do you look so grave? Do you not love Lord Vargrave?"

"What a question!" said Evelyn, turning away her head, and forcing a laugh.

"It is no matter whether you do or not: it is a brilliant

position. He has rank, reputation, high office; all he wants is money, and that you will give him. Alas! I have no prospect so bright. I have no fortune, and I fear my face will never buy a title, an opera-box, and a house in Grosvenor Square. I wish I were the future Lady Vargrave."

"I am sure I wish you were," said Evelyn, with great *naïveté*; "you would suit Lord Vargrave better than I should."

Caroline laughed.

"Why do you think so?"

"Oh, his way of thinking is like yours; he never says anything I can sympathize with."

"A pretty compliment to me! Depend upon it, my dear, you will sympathize with me when you have seen as much of the world. But Lord Vargrave — is he too old?"

"No, I don't think of his age; and indeed he looks younger than he is."

"Is he handsome?"

"He is what may be called handsome, — you would think so."

"Well, if he comes here, I will do my best to win him from you; so look to yourself."

"Oh, I should be so grateful; I should like him so much, if he would fall in love with you!"

"I fear there is no chance of that."

"But how," said Evelyn, hesitatingly, after a pause, — "how is it that you have seen so much more of the world than I have? I thought Mr. Merton lived a great deal in the country."

"Yes, but my uncle, Sir John Merton, is member for the county; my grandmother on my father's side — Lady Elizabeth, who has Tregony Castle (which we have just left) for her jointure-house — goes to town almost every season, and I have spent three seasons with her. She is a charming old woman, — quite the *grand dame*. I am sorry to say she remains in Cornwall this year. She has not been very well; the physicians forbid late hours and London; but even in the country we are very gay. My uncle lives near us, and though a wid-

ower, has his house full when down at Merton Park; and Papa, too, is rich, very hospitable and popular, and will, I hope, be a bishop one of these days — not at all like a mere country parson; and so, somehow or other, I have learned to be ambitious, — we are an ambitious family on Papa's side. But, alas! I have not your cards to play. Young, beautiful, and an heiress! Ah, what prospects! You should make your mamma take you to town."

"To town! she would be wretched at the very idea. Oh, you don't know us."

"I can't help fancying, Miss Evelyn," said Caroline, archly, "that you are not so blind to Lord Vargrave's perfections and so indifferent to London, only from the pretty innocent way of thinking, that so prettily and innocently you express. I dare say, if the truth were known, there is some handsome young rector, besides the old curate, who plays the flute, and preaches sentimental sermons in white kid gloves."

Evelyn laughed merrily, — so merrily that Caroline's suspicions vanished. They continued to walk and talk thus till the night came on, and then they went in; and Evelyn showed Caroline her drawings, which astonished that young lady, who was a good judge of accomplishments. Evelyn's performance on the piano astonished her yet more; but Caroline consoled herself on this point, for her voice was more powerful, and she sang French songs with much more spirit. Caroline showed talent in all she undertook; but Evelyn, despite her simplicity, had genius, though as yet scarcely developed, for she had quickness, emotion, susceptibility, imagination. And the difference between talent and genius lies rather in the heart than the head.

CHAPTER VII.

Dost thou feel

The solemn whispering influence of the scene

Oppressing thy young heart, that thou dost draw

More closely to my side ? — F. HEMANS: *Wood Walk and Hymn.*

CAROLINE and Evelyn, as was natural, became great friends. They were not kindred to each other in disposition; but they were thrown together, and friendship thus forced upon both. Unsuspecting and sanguine, it was natural to Evelyn to admire; and Caroline was, to her inexperience, a brilliant and imposing novelty. Sometimes Miss Merton's worldliness of thought shocked Evelyn; but then Caroline had a way with her as if she were not in earnest, — as if she were merely indulging an inclination towards irony; nor was she without a certain vein of sentiment that persons a little hackneyed in the world and young ladies a little disappointed that they are not wives instead of maids, easily acquire. Trite as this vein of sentiment was, poor Evelyn thought it beautiful and most feeling. Then, Caroline was clever, entertaining, cordial, with all that superficial superiority that a girl of twenty-three who knows London readily exercises over a country girl of seventeen. On the other hand, Caroline was kind and affectionate towards her. The clergyman's daughter felt that she could not be always superior, even in fashion, to the wealthy heiress.

One evening, as Mrs. Leslie and Mrs. Merton sat under the veranda of the cottage, without their hostess, who had gone alone into the village, and the young ladies were confidentially conversing on the lawn, Mrs. Leslie said rather abruptly, "Is not Evelyn a delightful creature? How unconscious of her beauty; how simple, and yet so naturally gifted!"

"I have never seen one who interested me more," said Mrs. Merton, settling her *pélerine*; "she is extremely pretty."

"I am so anxious about her," resumed Mrs. Leslie, thoughtfully. "You know the wish of the late Lord Vargrave that she should marry his nephew, the present lord, when she reaches the age of eighteen. She only wants nine or ten months of that time; she has seen nothing of the world: she is not fit to decide for herself; and Lady Vargrave, the best of human creatures, is still herself almost too inexperienced in the world to be a guide for one so young placed in such peculiar circumstances, and of prospects so brilliant. Lady Vargrave at heart is a child still, and will be so even when as old as I am."

"It is very true," said Mrs. Merton. "Don't you fear that the girls will catch cold? The dew is falling, and the grass must be wet."

"I have thought," continued Mrs. Leslie, without heeding the latter part of Mrs. Merton's speech, "that it would be a kind thing to invite Evelyn to stay with you a few months at the Rectory. To be sure, it is not like London; but you see a great deal of the world. The society at your house is well selected, and at times even brilliant; she will meet young people of her own age, and young people fashion and form each other."

"I was thinking myself that I should like to invite her," said Mrs. Merton; "I will consult Caroline."

"Caroline, I am sure, would be delighted; the difficulty lies rather in Evelyn herself."

"You surprise me! she must be moped to death here."

"But will she leave her mother?"

"Why, Caroline often leaves me," said Mrs. Merton.

Mrs. Leslie was silent, and Evelyn and her new friend now joined the mother and daughter.

"I have been trying to persuade Evelyn to pay us a little visit," said Caroline; "she could accompany us so nicely; and if she is still strange with us, dear grandmamma goes too, — I am sure we can make her at home."

"How odd!" said Mrs. Merton; "we were just saying the same thing. My dear Miss Cameron, we should be so happy to have you."

"And I should be so happy to go, if Mamma would but go too."

As she spoke, the moon, just risen, showed the form of Lady Vargrave slowly approaching the house. By the light, her features seemed more pale than usual; and her slight and delicate form, with its gliding motion and noiseless step, had in it something almost ethereal and unearthly.

Evelyn turned and saw her, and her heart smote her. Her mother, so wedded to the dear cottage — and had this gay stranger rendered that dear cottage less attractive, — she who had said she could live and die in its humble precincts? Abruptly she left her new friend, hastened to her mother, and threw her arms fondly round her.

"You are pale; you have over-fatigued yourself. Where have you been? Why did you not take me with you?"

Lady Vargrave pressed Evelyn's hand affectionately.

"You care for me too much," said she. "I am but a dull companion for you; I was so glad to see you happy with one better suited to your gay spirits. What can we do when she leaves us?"

"Ah, I want no companion but my own, own mother. And have I not Sultan, too?" added Evelyn, smiling away the tear that had started to her eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRIEND after friend departs ;

Who hath not lost a friend ?

There is no union here of hearts

That finds not here an end. — J. MONTGOMERY.

THAT night Mrs. Leslie sought Lady Vargrave in her own room. As she entered gently she observed that, late as the hour was, Lady Vargrave was stationed by the open window, and seemed intently gazing on the scene below. Mrs. Leslie

reached her side unperceived. The moonlight was exceedingly bright; and just beyond the garden, from which it was separated but by a slight fence, lay the solitary churchyard of the hamlet, with the slender spire of the holy edifice rising high and tapering into the shining air. It was a calm and tranquillizing scene; and so intent was Lady Vargrave's abstracted gaze, that Mrs. Leslie was unwilling to disturb her revery.

At length Lady Vargrave turned; and there was that patient and pathetic resignation written in her countenance which belongs to those whom the world can deceive no more, and who have fixed their hearts in the life beyond.

Mrs. Leslie, whatever she thought or felt, said nothing, except in kindly remonstrance on the indiscretion of braving the night air. The window was closed; they sat down to confer.

Mrs. Leslie repeated the invitation given to Evelyn, and urged the advisability of accepting it. "It is cruel to separate you," said she; "I feel it acutely. Why not, then, come with Evelyn? You shake your head: why always avoid society? So young, yet you give yourself too much to the past!"

Lady Vargrave rose, and walked to a cabinet at the end of the room; she unlocked it, and beckoned to Mrs. Leslie to approach. In a drawer lay carefully folded articles of female dress, — rude, homely, ragged, — the dress of a peasant girl.

"Do these remind you of your first charity to me?" she said touchingly: "they tell me that I have nothing to do with the world in which you and yours, and Evelyn herself, should move."

"Too tender conscience! — your errors were but those of circumstances, of youth; — how have they been redeemed! none even suspect them. Your past history is known but to the good old Aubrey and myself. No breath, even of rumour, tarnishes the name of Lady Vargrave."

"Mrs. Leslie," said Lady Vargrave, reclosing the cabinet, and again seating herself, "my world lies around me; I cannot quit it. If I were of use to Evelyn, then indeed I would sacrifice, brave all; but I only cloud her spirits. I have no

advice to give her, no instruction to bestow. When she was a child I could watch over her; when she was sick, I could nurse her; but now she requires an adviser, a guide; and I feel too sensibly that this task is beyond my powers. I, a guide to youth and innocence, — *I!* No, I have nothing to offer her, dear child! but my love and my prayers. Let your daughter take her, then, — watch over her, guide, advise her. For me — unkind, ungrateful as it may seem — were she but happy, I could well bear to be alone!”

“But she — how will she, who loves you so, submit to this separation?”

“It will not be long; and,” added Lady Vargrave, with a serious, yet sweet smile, “she had better be prepared for that separation which must come at last. As year by year I outlive my last hope, — that of once more beholding *him*, — I feel that life becomes feebler and feebler, and I look more on that quiet churchyard as a home to which I am soon returning. At all events, Evelyn will be called upon to form new ties that must estrange her from me; let her wean herself from one so useless to her, to all the world, — now, and by degrees.”

“Speak not thus,” said Mrs. Leslie, strongly affected; “you have many years of happiness yet in store for you. The more you recede from youth, the fairer life will become to you.”

“God is good to me,” said the lady, raising her meek eyes; “and I have already found it so. I am contented.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE greater part of them seemed to be charmed with his presence.

MACKENZIE: *The Man of the World.*

It was with the greatest difficulty that Evelyn could at last be persuaded to consent to the separation from her mother; she wept bitterly at the thought. But Lady Vargrave, though

touched, was firm, and her firmness was of that soft, imploring character which Evelyn never could resist. The visit was to last some months, it is true, but she would return to the cottage; she would escape, too — and this, perhaps, unconsciously reconciled her more than aught else — the periodical visit of Lord Vargrave. At the end of July, when the parliamentary session at that unreformed era usually expired, he always came to Brook-Green for a month. His last visits had been most unwelcome to Evelyn, and this next visit she dreaded more than she had any of the former ones. It is strange, — the repugnance with which she regarded the suit of her affianced! — she, whose heart was yet virgin; who had never seen any one who, in form, manner, and powers to please, could be compared to the gay Lord Vargrave. And yet a sense of honour, of what was due to her dead benefactor, her more than father, — all combated that repugnance, and left her uncertain what course to pursue, uncalculating as to the future. In the happy elasticity of her spirits, and with a carelessness almost approaching to levity, which, to say truth, was natural to her, she did not often recall the solemn engagement that must soon be ratified or annulled; but when that thought did occur, it saddened her for hours, and left her listless and despondent. The visit to Mrs. Merton was, then, finally arranged, the day of departure fixed, when, one morning, came the following letter from Lord Vargrave himself: —

To the LADY VARGRAVE, *etc.*

MY DEAR FRIEND, — I find that we have a week's holiday in our do-nothing Chamber, and the weather is so delightful, that I long to share its enjoyment with those I love best. You will, therefore, see me almost as soon as you receive this; that is, I shall be with you at dinner on the same day. What can I say to Evelyn? Will you, dearest Lady Vargrave, make her accept all the homage which, when uttered by me, she seems half inclined to reject?

In haste, most affectionately yours,

VARGRAVE.

HAMILTON PLACE, April 30, 18—.

This letter was by no means welcome, either to Mrs. Leslie or to Evelyn. The former feared that Lord Vargrave would

disapprove of a visit, the real objects of which could scarcely be owned to him; the latter was reminded of all she desired to forget. But Lady Vargrave herself rather rejoiced at the thought of Lumley's arrival. Hitherto, in the spirit of her passive and gentle character, she had taken the engagement between Evelyn and Lord Vargrave almost as a matter of course. The will and wish of her late husband operated most powerfully on her mind; and while Evelyn was yet in childhood, Lumley's visits had ever been acceptable, and the playful girl liked the gay and good-humoured lord, who brought her all sorts of presents, and appeared as fond of dogs as herself. But Evelyn's recent change of manner, her frequent fits of dejection and thought, once pointed out to Lady Vargrave by Mrs. Leslie, aroused all the affectionate and maternal anxiety of the former. She was resolved to watch, to examine, to scrutinize, not only Evelyn's reception of Vargrave, but, as far as she could, the manner and disposition of Vargrave himself. She felt how solemn a trust was the happiness of a whole life; and she had that romance of heart, learned from Nature, not in books, which made her believe that there could be no happiness in a marriage without love.

The whole family party were on the lawn, when, an hour earlier than he was expected, the travelling carriage of Lord Vargrave was whirled along the narrow sweep that conducted from the lodge to the house. Vargrave, as he saw the party, kissed his hand from the window; and leaping from the carriage, when it stopped at the porch, hastened to meet his hostess.

"My dear Lady Vargrave, I am so glad to see you! You are looking charmingly; and Evelyn? — oh, there she is; the dear coquette, how lovely she is! how she has improved! But who [sinking his voice], who are those ladies?"

"Guests of ours, — Mrs. Leslie, whom you have often heard us speak of, but never met —"

"Yes; and the others?"

"Her daughter and grandchild."

"I shall be delighted to know them."

A more popular manner than Lord Vargrave's it is impos-

sible to conceive. Frank and prepossessing, even when the poor and reckless Mr. Ferrers, without rank or reputation, his smile, the tone of his voice, his familiar courtesy, — apparently so inartificial and approaching almost to a boyish bluntness of good-humour, — were irresistible in the rising statesman and favoured courtier.

Mrs. Merton was enchanted with him; Caroline thought him, at the first glance, the most fascinating person she had ever seen; even Mrs. Leslie, more grave, cautious, and penetrating, was almost equally pleased with the first impression; and it was not till, in his occasional silence, his features settled into their natural expression that she fancied she detected in the quick suspicious eye and the close compression of the lips the tokens of that wily, astute, and worldly character, which, in proportion as he had risen in his career, even his own party reluctantly and mysteriously assigned to one of their most prominent leaders.

When Vargrave took Evelyn's hand, and raised it with meaning gallantry to his lips, the girl first blushed deeply, and then turned pale as death; nor did the colour thus chased away soon return to the transparent cheek. Not noticing signs which might bear a twofold interpretation, Lumley, who seemed in high spirits, rattled away on a thousand matters, — praising the view, the weather, the journey, throwing out a joke here and a compliment there, and completing his conquest over Mrs. Merton and Caroline.

"You have left London in the very height of its gayety, Lord Vargrave," said Caroline, as they sat conversing after dinner.

"True, Miss Merton; but the country is in the height of its gayety too."

"Are you so fond of the country, then?"

"By fits and starts; my passion for it comes in with the early strawberries, and goes out with the hautboys. I lead so artificial a life; but then I hope it is a useful one. I want nothing but a home to make it a happy one."

"What is the latest news? — dear London! I am so sorry Grandmamma, Lady Elizabeth, is not going there this year,

so I am compelled to rusticate. Is Lady Jane D—— to be married at last?"

"Commend me to a young lady's idea of news, — always marriage! Lady Jane D——! yes, she is to be married, as you say — *at last!* While she was a beauty, our cold sex was shy of her; but she has now faded into plainness, — the proper colour for a wife."

"Complimentary!"

"Indeed it is — for you beautiful women we love too much for our own happiness — heigho! — and a prudent marriage means friendly indifference, not rapture and despair. But give me beauty and love; I never was prudent: it is not my weakness."

Though Caroline was his sole supporter in this dialogue, Lord Vargrave's eyes attempted to converse with Evelyn, who was unusually silent and abstracted. Suddenly Lord Vargrave seemed aware that he was scarcely general enough in his talk for his hearers. He addressed himself to Mrs. Leslie, and glided back, as it were, into a former generation. He spoke of persons gone and things forgotten; he made the subject interesting even to the young, by a succession of various and sparkling anecdotes. No one could be more agreeable; even Evelyn now listened to him with pleasure, for to all women wit and intellect have their charm. But still there was a cold and sharp levity in the tone of the man of the world that prevented the charm sinking below the surface. To Mrs. Leslie he seemed unconsciously to betray a laxity of principle; to Evelyn, a want of sentiment and heart. Lady Vargrave, who did not understand a character of this description, listened attentively, and said to herself, "Evelyn may admire, but I fear she cannot love him." Still, time passed quickly in Lumley's presence, and Caroline thought she had never spent so pleasant an evening.

When Lord Vargrave retired to his room, he threw himself in his chair, and yawned with exceeding fervour. His servant arranged his dressing-robe, and placed his portfolios and letter-boxes on the table.

"What o'clock is it?" said Lumley.

"Very early, my lord; only eleven."

"The devil! The country air is wonderfully exhausting. I am very sleepy; you may go."

"This little girl," said Lumley, stretching himself, "is preternaturally shy. I must neglect her no longer — yet it is surely all safe? She has grown monstrous pretty; but the other girl is more amusing, more to my taste, and a much easier conquest, I fancy. Her great dark eyes seem full of admiration for my lordship. Sensible young woman! she may be useful in piquing Evelyn."

CHAPTER X.

Julio. Wilt thou have him? — *The Maid in the Mill.*

LORD VARGRAVE heard the next morning, with secret distaste and displeasure, of Evelyn's intended visit to the Mertons. He could scarcely make any open objection to it; but he did not refrain from many insinuations as to its impropriety.

"My dear friend," said he to Lady Vargrave, "it is scarcely right in you (pardon me for saying it) to commit Evelyn to the care of comparative strangers. Mrs. Leslie, indeed, you know; but Mrs. Merton, you allow, you have now seen for the first time. A most respectable person doubtless; but still, recollect how young Evelyn is, how rich; what a prize to any younger sons in the Merton family (if such there be). Miss Merton herself is a shrewd, worldly girl; and if she were of our sex would make a capital fortune-hunter. Don't think my fear is selfish; I do not speak for myself. If I were Evelyn's brother, I should be yet more earnest in my remonstrance."

"But, Lord Vargrave, poor Evelyn is dull here; my spirits infect hers. She ought to mix more with those of her own age, to see more of the world before — before —"

"Before her marriage with me? Forgive me, but is not

that my affair? If I am contented, nay, charmed with her innocence, if I prefer it to all the arts which society could teach her, surely you would be acquitted for leaving her in the beautiful simplicity that makes her chief fascination? She will see enough of the world as Lady Vargrave."

"But if she should resolve never to be Lady Vargrave — ?"

Lumley started, bit his lip, and frowned. Lady Vargrave had never before seen on his countenance the dark expression it now wore. He recollected and recovered himself, as he observed her eye fixed upon him, and said, with a constrained smile, —

"Can you anticipate an event so fatal to my happiness, so unforeseen, so opposed to all my poor uncle's wishes, as Evelyn's rejection of a suit pursued for years, and so solemnly sanctioned in her very childhood?"

"She must decide for herself," said Lady Vargrave. "Your uncle carefully distinguished between a wish and a command. Her heart is as yet untouched. If she can love you, may you deserve her affection."

"It shall be my study to do so. But why this departure from your roof just when we ought to see most of each other? It cannot be that you would separate us?"

"I fear, Lord Vargrave, that if Evelyn were to remain here, she would decide against you. I fear if you press her now, such now may be her premature decision. Perhaps this arises from too fond an attachment for her home; perhaps even a short absence from her home — from me — may more reconcile her to a permanent separation."

Vargrave could say no more, for here they were joined by Caroline and Mrs. Merton; but his manner was changed, nor could he recover the gayety of the previous night.

When, however, he found time for meditation, he contrived to reconcile himself to the intended visit. He felt that it was easy to secure the friendship of the whole of the Merton family; and that friendship might be more useful to him than the neutral part adopted by Lady Vargrave. He should, of course, be invited to the rectory; it was much nearer London than Lady Vargrave's cottage. he could more often escape

from public cares to superintend his private interest. A country neighbourhood, particularly at that season of the year, was not likely to abound in very dangerous rivals. Evelyn would, he saw, be surrounded by a *worldly* family, and he thought that an advantage; it might serve to dissipate Evelyn's romantic tendencies, and make her sensible of the pleasures of the London life, the official rank, the gay society that her union with him would offer as an equivalent for her fortune. In short, as was his wont, he strove to make the best of the new turn affairs had taken. Though guardian to Miss Cameron, and one of the trustees for the fortune she was to receive on attaining her majority, he had not the right to dictate as to her residence. The late lord's will had expressly and pointedly corroborated the natural and lawful authority of Lady Vargrave in all matters connected with Evelyn's education and home. It may be as well, in this place, to add, that to Vargrave and the co-trustee, Mr. Gustavus Douce, a banker of repute and eminence, the testator left large discretionary powers as to the investment of the fortune. He had stated it as his wish that from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and thirty thousand pounds should be invested in the purchase of a landed estate; but he had left it to the discretion of the trustees to increase that sum, even to the amount of the whole capital, should an estate of adequate importance be in the market, while the selection of time and purchase was unreservedly confided to the trustees. Vargrave had hitherto objected to every purchase in the market, — not that he was insensible to the importance and consideration of landed property, but because, till he himself became the legal receiver of the income, he thought it less trouble to suffer the money to lie in the Funds, than to be pestered with all the onerous details in the management of an estate that might never be his. He, however, with no less ardour than his deceased relative, looked forward to the time when the title of Vargrave should be based upon the venerable foundation of feudal manors and seignorial acres.

"Why did you not tell me Lord Vargrave was so charming?" said Caroline to Evelyn, as the two girls were saunter

ing, in familiar *tête-à-tête*, along the gardens. "You will be very happy with such a companion."

Evelyn made no answer for a few moments, and then, turning abruptly round to Caroline, and stopping short, she said, with a kind of tearful eagerness, "Dear Caroline, you are so wise, so kind too; advise me, tell me what is best. I am very unhappy."

Miss Merton was moved and surprised by Evelyn's earnestness.

"But what is it, my poor Evelyn," said she; "why are you unhappy? — you whose fate seems to me so enviable."

"I cannot love Lord Vargrave; I recoil from the idea of marrying him. Ought I not fairly to tell him so? Ought I not to say that I cannot fulfil the wish that — oh, there's the thought which leaves me so irresolute! — His uncle bequeathed to me — me who have no claim of relationship — the fortune that should have been Lord Vargrave's, in the belief that my hand would restore it to him. It is almost a fraud to refuse him. Am I not to be pitied?"

"But why can you not love Lord Vargrave? If past the *première jeunesse*, he is still handsome. He is more than handsome, — he has the air of rank, an eye that fascinates, a smile that wins, the manners that please, the abilities that command, the world! Handsome, clever, admired, distinguished — what can woman desire more in her lover, her husband? Have you ever formed some fancy, some ideal of the one you could love, and how does Lord Vargrave fall short of the vision?"

"Have I ever formed an ideal? — oh, yes!" said Evelyn, with a beautiful enthusiasm that lighted up her eyes, blushed in her cheek, and heaved her bosom beneath its robe; "something that in loving I could also revere, — a mind that would elevate my own; a heart that could sympathize with my weakness, my follies, my romance, if you will; and in which I could treasure my whole soul."

"You paint a schoolmaster, not a lover!" said Caroline, "You do not care, then, whether this hero be handsome or young?"

"Oh, yes, he should be both," said Evelyn, innocently; "and yet," she added, after a pause, and with an infantine playfulness of manner and countenance, "I know you will laugh at me, but I think I could be in love with more than one at the same time!"

"A common case, but a rare confession!"

"Yes; for if I might ask for the youth and outward advantages that please the eye, I could also love with a yet deeper love that which would speak to my imagination, — Intellect, Genius, Fame! Ah, these have an immortal youth and imperishable beauty of their own!"

"You are a very strange girl."

"But we are on a very strange subject — it is all an enigma!" said Evelyn, shaking her wise little head with a pretty gravity, half mock, half real. "Ah, if Lord Vargrave should love you — and you — oh, you *would* love him, and then I should be free, and so happy!"

They were then on the lawn in sight of the cottage windows, and Lumley, lifting his eyes from the newspaper, which had just arrived and been seized with all a politician's avidity, saw them in the distance. He threw down the paper, mused a moment or two, then took up his hat and joined them; but before he did so, he surveyed himself in the glass. "I think I look young enough still," thought he.

"Two cherries on one stalk," said Lumley, gayly: "by the by, it is not a complimentary simile. What young lady would be like a cherry? — such an uninteresting, common, charity-boy sort of fruit. For my part, I always associate cherries with the image of a young gentleman in corduroys and a skeleton jacket, with one pocket full of marbles, and the other full of worms for fishing, with three-halfpence in the left paw, and two cherries on one stalk (Helena and Hermia) in the right."

"How droll you are!" said Caroline, laughing.

"Much obliged to you, and don't envy your discrimination, 'Melancholy marks me for its own.' You ladies, — ah, yours is the life for gay spirits and light hearts; to us are left business and politics, law, physic, and murder, by way of pro-

fessions; abuse, nicknamed fame; and the privilege of seeing how universal a thing, among the great and the wealthy, is that pleasant vice, beggary, — which privilege is proudly entitled ‘patronage and power.’ Are we the things to be gay, — ‘droll,’ as you say? Oh, no, all our spirits are forced, believe me. Miss Cameron, did you ever know that wretched species of hysterical affection called ‘forced spirits’? Never, I am sure; your ingenuous smile, your laughing eyes, are the index to a happy and a sanguine heart.”

“And what of me?” asked Caroline, quickly, and with a slight blush.

“You, Miss Merton? Ah, I have not yet read your character, — a fair page, but an unknown letter. You, however, have seen the world, and know that we must occasionally wear a mask.” Lord Vargrave sighed as he spoke, and relapsed into sudden silence; then looking up, his eyes encountered Caroline’s, which were fixed upon him. Their gaze flattered him; Caroline turned away, and busied herself with a rose-bush. Lumley gathered one of the flowers, and presented it to her. Evelyn was a few steps in advance.

“There is no thorn in this rose,” said he; “may the offering be an omen. You are now Evelyn’s friend, oh, be mine; she is to be your guest. Do not scorn to plead for me.”

“Can *you* want a pleader?” said Caroline, with a slight tremor in her voice.

“Charming Miss Merton, love is diffident and fearful; but it must now find a voice, to which may Evelyn benignly listen. What I leave unsaid — would that my new friend’s eloquence could supply.”

He bowed slightly, and joined Evelyn. Caroline understood the hint, and returned alone and thoughtfully to the house.

“Miss Cameron — Evelyn — ah, still let me call you so, as in the happy and more familiar days of your childhood, I wish you could read my heart at this moment. You are about to leave your home; new scenes will surround, new faces smile on you; dare I hope that I may still be remembered?”

He attempted to take her hand as he spoke; Evelyn with drew it gently.

"Ah, my lord," said she, in a very low voice, "if remembrance were all that you asked of me—"

"It is all, — favourable remembrance, remembrance of the love of the past, remembrance of the bond to come."

Evelyn shivered. "It is better to speak openly," said she. "Let me throw myself on your generosity. I am not insensible to your brilliant qualities, to the honour of your attachment; but — but — as the time approaches in which you will call for my decision, let me now say, that I cannot feel for you — those — those sentiments, without which you could not desire our union, — without which it were but a wrong to both of us to form it. Nay, listen to me. I grieve bitterly at the tenor of your too generous uncle's will; can I not atone to you? Willingly would I sacrifice the fortune that, indeed, ought to be yours; accept it, and remain my friend."

"Cruel Evelyn! and can you suppose that it is your fortune I seek? It is yourself. Heaven is my witness, that, had you no dowry but your hand and heart, it were treasure enough to me. You think you cannot love me. Evelyn, you do not yet know yourself. Alas! your retirement in this distant village, my own unceasing avocations, which chain me, like a slave, to the galley-oar of politics and power, have kept us separate. You do not know me. I am willing to hazard the experiment of that knowledge. To devote my life to you, to make you partaker of my ambition, my career, to raise you to the highest eminence in the matronage of England, to transfer pride from myself to you, to love and to honour and to prize you, — all this will be my boast; and all this will win love for me at last. Fear not, Evelyn, — fear not for your happiness; with me you shall know no sorrow. Affection at home, splendour abroad, await you. I have passed the rough and arduous part of my career; sunshine lies on the summit to which I climb. No station in England is too high for me to aspire to, — prospects, how bright with you, how dark without you! Ah, Evelyn! be this hand mine — the heart shall follow!"

Vargrave's words were artful and eloquent; the *words* were calculated to win their way, but the manner, the tone of voice, wanted earnestness and truth. This was his defect; this characterized all his attempts to seduce or to lead others, in public or in private life. He had no heart, no deep passion, in what he undertook. He could impress you with the conviction of his ability, and leave the conviction imperfect, because he could not convince you that he was sincere. That best gift of mental power — *earnestness* — was wanting to him; and Lord Vargrave's deficiency of heart was the true cause why he was not a great man. Still, Evelyn was affected by his words; she suffered the hand he now once more took to remain passively in his, and said timidly, "Why, with sentiments so generous and confiding, why do you love me, who cannot return your affection worthily? No, Lord Vargrave; there are many who must see you with juster eyes than mine, — many fairer, and even wealthier. Indeed, indeed, it cannot be. Do not be offended, but think that the fortune left to me was on one condition I cannot, ought not to fulfil. Failing that condition, in equity and honour it reverts to you."

"Talk not thus, I implore you, Evelyn; do not imagine me the worldly calculator that my enemies deem me. But, to remove at once from your mind the possibility of such a compromise between your honour and repugnance — repugnance! have I lived to say that word? — know that your fortune is not at your own disposal. Save the small forfeit that awaits your non-compliance with my uncle's dying prayer, the whole is settled peremptorily on yourself and your children; it is entailed, — you cannot alienate it. Thus, then, your generosity can never be evinced but to him on whom you bestow your hand. Ah, let me recall that melancholy scene. Your benefactor on his death-bed, your mother kneeling by his side, your hand clasped in mine, and those lips, with their latest breath, uttering at once a blessing and a command."

"Ah, cease, cease, my lord!" said Evelyn, sobbing.

"No; bid me not cease before you tell me you will be mine. Beloved Evelyn, I may hope, — you will not resolve against me?"

"No," said Evelyn, raising her eyes and struggling for composure; "I feel too well what should be my duty; I will endeavor to perform it. Ask me no more now. I will struggle to answer you as you wish hereafter."

Lord Vargrave, resolved to push to the utmost the advantage he had gained, was about to reply when he heard a step behind him; and turning round, quickly and discomposed, beheld a venerable form approaching them. The occasion was lost: Evelyn also turned; and seeing who was the intruder, sprang towards him almost with a cry of joy.

The new comer was a man who had passed his seventieth year; but his old age was green, his step light, and on his healthful and benignant countenance time had left but few furrows. He was clothed in black; and his locks, which were white as snow, escaped from the broad hat, and almost touched his shoulders.

The old man smiled upon Evelyn, and kissed her forehead fondly. He then turned to Lord Vargrave, who, recovering his customary self-possession, advanced to meet him with extended hand.

"My dear Mr. Aubrey, this is a welcome surprise. I heard you were not at the vicarage, or I would have called on you."

"Your lordship honours me," replied the curate. "For the first time for thirty years I have been thus long absent from my cure; but I am now returned, I hope, to end my days among my flock."

"And what," asked Vargrave, — "what — if the question be not presumptuous — occasioned your unwilling absence?"

"My lord," replied the old man, with a gentle smile, "a new vicar has been appointed. I went to him, to proffer an humble prayer that I might remain amongst those whom I regarded as my children. I have buried one generation, I have married another, I have baptized a third."

"You should have had the vicarage itself; you should be better provided for, my dear Mr. Aubrey; I will speak to the Lord Chancellor."

Five times before had Lord Vargrave uttered the same promise, and the curate smiled to hear the familiar words.

"The vicarage, my lord, is a family living, and is now vested in a young man who requires wealth more than I do. He has been kind to me, and re-established me among my flock; I would not leave them for a bishopric. My child," continued the curate, addressing Evelyn with great affection, "you are surely unwell, — you are paler than when I left you."

Evelyn clung fondly to his arm, and smiled — her old gay smile — as she replied to him. They took the way towards the house.

The curate remained with them for an hour. There was a mingled sweetness and dignity in his manner which had in it something of the primitive character we poetically ascribe to the pastors of the Church. Lady Vargrave seemed to vie with Evelyn which should love him the most. When he retired to his home, which was not many yards distant from the cottage, Evelyn, pleading a headache, sought her chamber, and Lumley, to soothe his mortification, turned to Caroline, who had seated herself by his side. Her conversation amused him, and her evident admiration flattered. While Lady Vargrave absented herself, in motherly anxiety, to attend on Evelyn, while Mrs. Leslie was occupied at her frame, and Mrs. Merton looked on, and talked indolently to the old lady of rheumatism and sermons, of children's complaints and servants' misdemeanours, — the conversation between Lord Vargrave and Caroline, at first gay and animated, grew gradually more sentimental and subdued; their voices took a lower tone, and Caroline sometimes turned away her head and blushed.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE stands the Messenger of Truth — there stands
The Legate of the skies. — COWPER.

FROM that night Lumley found no opportunity for private conversation with Evelyn; she evidently shunned to meet with him alone. She was ever with her mother or Mrs. Leslie or the good curate, who spent much of his time at the cottage; for the old man had neither wife nor children, he was alone at home, he had learned to make his home with the widow and her daughter. With them he was an object of the tenderest affection, of the deepest veneration. Their love delighted him, and he returned it with the fondness of a parent and the benevolence of a pastor. He was a rare character, that village priest!

Born of humble parentage, Edward Aubrey had early displayed abilities which attracted the notice of a wealthy proprietor, who was not displeased to affect the patron. Young Aubrey was sent to school, and thence to college as a sizar: he obtained several prizes, and took a high degree. Aubrey was not without the ambition and the passions of youth: he went into the world, ardent, inexperienced, and without a guide. He drew back before errors grew into crimes, or folly became a habit. It was nature and affection that reclaimed and saved him from either alternative, — fame or ruin. His widowed mother was suddenly stricken with disease. Blind and bedridden, her whole dependence was on her only son. This affliction called forth a new character in Edward Aubrey. This mother had stripped herself of so many comforts to provide for him, — he devoted his youth to her in return. She was now old and imbecile. With the mingled selfishness and sentiment of age, she would not come to London, — she would not move from the village where her husband lay buried, where her youth had been spent. In this village the able

and ambitious young man buried his hopes and his talents; by degrees the quiet and tranquillity of the country life became dear to him. As steps in a ladder, so piety leads to piety, and religion grew to him a habit. He took orders and entered the Church. A disappointment in love ensued; it left on his mind and heart a sober and resigned melancholy, which at length mellowed into content. His profession and its sweet duties became more and more dear to him; in the hopes of the next world he forgot the ambition of the present. He did not seek to shine, —

“More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.”

His own birth made the poor his brothers, and their dispositions and wants familiar to him. His own early errors made him tolerant to the faults of others, — few men are charitable who remember not that they have sinned. In our faults lie the germs of virtues. Thus gradually and serenely had worn away his life — obscure but useful, calm but active, — a man whom “the great prizes” of the Church might have rendered an ambitious schemer, to whom a modest confidence gave the true pastoral power, — to conquer the world within himself, and to sympathize with the wants of others. Yes, he was a rare character, that village priest!



CHAPTER XII.

Tout notre raisonnement se réduit à céder au sentiment.¹ — PASCAL.

LORD VARGRAVE, who had no desire to remain alone with the widow when the guests were gone, arranged his departure for the same day as that fixed for Mrs. Merton's; and as their road lay together for several miles, it was settled that they should all dine at —, whence Lord Vargrave would proceed to London. Failing to procure a second chance-interview with

¹ “All our reasoning reduces itself to yielding to sentiment.”

Evelyn, and afraid to demand a formal one — for he felt the insecurity of the ground he stood on — Lord Vargrave, irritated and somewhat mortified, sought, as was his habit, whatever amusement was in his reach. In the conversation of Caroline Merton — shrewd, worldly, and ambitious — he found the sort of plaything that he desired. They were thrown much together; but to Vargrave, at least, there appeared no danger in the intercourse; and perhaps his chief object was to pique Evelyn, as well as to gratify his own spleen.

It was the evening before Evelyn's departure; the little party had been for the last hour dispersed; Mrs. Merton was in her own room, making to herself gratuitous and unnecessary occupation in seeing her woman *pack up*. It was just the kind of task that delighted her. To sit in a large chair and see somebody else at work — to say languidly, "Don't crumple that scarf, Jane; and where shall we put Miss Caroline's blue bonnet?" — gave her a very comfortable notion of her own importance and habits of business, — a sort of title to be the superintendent of a family and the wife of a rector. Caroline had disappeared, so had Lord Vargrave; but the first was supposed to be with Evelyn, the second, employed in writing letters, — at least, it was so when they had been last observed. Mrs. Leslie was alone in the drawing-room, and absorbed in anxious and benevolent thoughts on the critical situation of her young favourite, about to enter an age and a world the perils of which Mrs. Leslie had not forgotten.

It was at this time that Evelyn, forgetful of Lord Vargrave and his suit, of every one, of everything but the grief of the approaching departure, found herself alone in a little arbour that had been built upon the cliff to command the view of the sea below. That day she had been restless, perturbed; she had visited every spot consecrated by youthful recollections; she had clung with fond regret to every place in which she had held sweet converse with her mother. Of a disposition singularly warm and affectionate, she had often, in her secret heart, pined for a more yearning and enthusiastic love than it seemed in the subdued nature of Lady Vargrave to bestow.

In the affection of the latter, gentle and never fluctuating as it was, there seemed to her a something wanting, which she could not define. She had watched that beloved face all the morning. She had hoped to see the tender eyes fixed upon her, and hear the meek voice exclaim, "I cannot part with my child!" All the gay pictures which the light-hearted Caroline drew of the scenes she was to enter had vanished away — now that the hour approached when her mother was to be left alone. Why was she to go? It seemed to her an unnecessary cruelty.

As she thus sat, she did not observe that Mr. Aubrey, who had seen her at a distance, was now bending his way to her; and not till he had entered the harbour, and taken her hand, did she waken from those reveries in which youth, the Dreamer and the Desirer, so morbidly indulges.

"Tears, my child?" said the curate. "Nay, be not ashamed of them; they become you in this hour. How we shall miss you! and you, too, will not forget us?"

"Forget you! Ah, no, indeed! But why should I leave you? Why will you not speak to my mother, implore her to let me remain? We were so happy till these strangers came. We did not think there was any other world, — *here* there is world enough for me!"

"My poor Evelyn," said Mr. Aubrey, gently, "I have spoken to your mother and to Mrs. Leslie; they have confided to me all the reasons for your departure, and I cannot but subscribe to their justice. You do not want many months of the age when you will be called upon to decide whether Lord Vargrave shall be your husband. Your mother shrinks from the responsibility of influencing your decision; and here, my child, inexperienced, and having seen so little of others, how can you know your own heart?"

"But, oh, Mr. Aubrey," said Evelyn, with an earnestness that overcame embarrassment, "have I a choice left to me? Can I be ungrateful, disobedient to him who was a father to me? Ought I not to sacrifice my own happiness? And how willingly would I do so, if my mother would smile on me approvingly!"

"My child," said the curate, gravely, "an old man is a bad judge of the affairs of youth; yet in this matter, I think your duty plain. Do not resolutely set yourself against Lord Vargrave's claim; do not persuade yourself that you must be unhappy in a union with him. Compose your mind, think seriously upon the choice before you, refuse all decision at the present moment; wait until the appointed time arrives, or, at least, more nearly approaches. Meanwhile, I understand that Lord Vargrave is to be a frequent visitor at Mrs. Merton's; there you will see him with others, his character will show itself. Study his principles, his disposition; examine whether he is one whom you can esteem and render happy: there may be a love without enthusiasm, and yet sufficient for domestic felicity, and for the employment of the affections. You will insensibly, too, learn from other parts of his character which he does not exhibit to us. If the result of time and examination be that you can cheerfully obey the late lord's dying wish, unquestionably it will be the happier decision. If not, if you still shrink from vows at which your heart now rebels, as unquestionably you may, with an acquitted conscience, become free. The best of us are imperfect judges of the happiness of others. In the woe or weal of a whole life, we must decide for ourselves. Your benefactor could not mean you to be wretched; and if he now, with eyes purified from all worldly mists, look down upon you, his spirit will approve your choice; for when we quit the world, all worldly ambition dies with us. What now to the immortal soul can be the title and the rank which on earth, with the desires of earth, your benefactor hoped to secure to his adopted child? This is my advice. Look on the bright side of things, and wait calmly for the hour when Lord Vargrave can demand your decision."

The words of the priest, which well defined her duty, inexpressibly soothed and comforted Evelyn; and the advice upon other and higher matters, which the good man pressed upon a mind so softened at that hour to receive religious impressions, was received with gratitude and respect. Subsequently their conversation fell upon Lady Vargrave, — a theme dear to both

of them. The old man was greatly touched by the poor girl's unselfish anxiety for her mother's comfort, by her fears that she might be missed, in those little attentions which filial love alone can render; he was almost yet more touched when, with a less disinterested feeling, Evelyn added mournfully, —

"Yet why, after all, should I fancy she will so miss me? Ah, though I will not *dare* complain of it, I feel still that she does not love me as I love her."

"Evelyn," said the curate, with mild reproach, "have I not said that your mother has known sorrow? And though sorrow does not annihilate affection, it subdues its expression, and moderates its outward signs."

Evelyn sighed, and said no more.

As the good old man and his young friend returned to the cottage, Lord Vargrave and Caroline approached them, emerging from an opposite part of the grounds. The former hastened to Evelyn with his usual gayety and frank address; and there was so much charm in the manner of a man, whom *apparently* the world and its cares had never rendered artificial or reserved, that the curate himself was impressed by it. He thought that Evelyn might be happy with one amiable enough for a companion and wise enough for a guide. But old as he was, he had loved, and he knew that there are instincts in the heart which defy all our calculations.

While Lumley was conversing, the little gate that made the communication between the gardens and the neighbouring churchyard, through which was the nearest access to the village, creaked on its hinges, and the quiet and solitary figure of Lady Vargrave threw its shadow over the grass.

CHAPTER XIII.

AND I can listen to thee yet,
Can lie upon the plain;
And listen till I do beget
That golden time again. — WORDSWORTH.

It was past midnight — hostess and guests had retired to repose — when Lady Vargrave's door opened gently. The lady herself was kneeling at the foot of the bed; the moonlight came through the half-drawn curtains of the casement, and by its ray her pale, calm features looked paler, and yet more hushed.

Evelyn, for she was the intruder, paused at the threshold till her mother rose from her devotions, and then she threw herself on Lady Vargrave's breast, sobbing as if her heart would break. Hers were the wild, generous, irresistible emotions of youth. Lady Vargrave, perhaps, had known them once; at least, she could sympathize with them now.

She strained her child to her bosom; she stroked back her hair, and kissed her fondly, and spoke to her soothingly.

"Mother," sobbed Evelyn, "I could not sleep, I could not rest. Bless me again, kiss me again; tell me that you love me — you cannot love me as I do you; but tell me that I am dear to you; tell me you will regret me, but not too much; tell me —" Here Evelyn paused, and could say no more.

"My best, my kindest Evelyn," said Lady Vargrave, "there is nothing on earth I love like you. Do not fancy I am ungrateful."

"Why do you say ungrateful? — your own child, — your only child!" And Evelyn covered her mother's face and hands with passionate tears and kisses.

At that moment, certain it is that Lady Vargrave's heart reproached her with not having, indeed, loved this sweet girl as she deserved. True, no mother was more mild, more atten-

tive, more fostering, more anxious for a daughter's welfare, but Evelyn was right. The gushing fondness, the mysterious entering into every subtle thought and feeling, which should have characterized the love of such a mother to such a child, had been to outward appearance wanting. Even in this present parting there had been a prudence, an exercise of reasoning, that savoured more of duty than love. Lady Vargrave felt all this with remorse; she gave way to emotions new to her, — at least to exhibit; she wept with Evelyn, and returned her caresses with almost equal fervour. Perhaps, too, she thought at that moment of what love that warm nature was susceptible; and she trembled for her future fate. It was as a full reconciliation — that mournful hour — between feelings on either side, which something mysterious seemed to have checked before; and that last night the mother and the child did not separate, — the same couch contained them: and when, worn out with some emotions which she could not reveal, Lady Vargrave fell into the sleep of exhaustion, Evelyn's arm was round her, and Evelyn's eyes watched her with pious and anxious love as the gray morning dawned.

She left her mother still sleeping, when the sun rose, and went silently down into the dear room below, and again busied herself in a thousand little provident cares, which she wondered she had forgot before.

The carriages were at the door before the party had assembled at the melancholy breakfast-table. Lord Vargrave was the last to appear.

"I have been like all cowards," said he, seating himself, — "anxious to defer an evil as long as possible; a bad policy, for it increases the worst of all pains, — that of suspense."

Mrs. Merton had undertaken the duties that appertain to the "hissing urn." "You prefer coffee, Lord Vargrave? Caroline, my dear —"

Caroline passed the cup to Lord Vargrave, who looked at her hand as he took it — there was a ring on one of those slender fingers never observed there before. Their eyes met, and Caroline coloured. Lord Vargrave turned to Evelyn, who, pale as death, but tearless and speechless, sat beside her

mother; he attempted in vain to draw her into conversation. Evelyn, who desired to restrain her feelings, would not trust herself to speak.

Mrs. Merton, ever undisturbed and placid, continued to talk on: to offer congratulations on the weather, — it was such a lovely day; and they should be off so early; it would be so well arranged, — they should be in such good time to dine at —, and then go three stages after dinner; the moon would be up.

“But,” said Lord Vargrave, “as I am to go with you as far as —, where our roads separate, I hope I am not condemned to go alone, with my red box, two old newspapers, and the blue devils. Have pity on me.”

“Perhaps you will take Grandmamma, then?” whispered Caroline, archly.

Lumley shrugged his shoulders, and replied in the same tone, —

“Yes, — provided you keep to the proverb, ‘*Les extrêmes se touchent*,’ and the lovely grandchild accompany the venerable grandmamma.”

“What would Evelyn say?” retorted Caroline.

Lumley sighed, and made no answer.

Mrs. Merton, who had hung fire while her daughter was carrying on this “aside,” now put in, —

“Suppose I and Caroline take your *britzka*, and you go in our old coach with Evelyn and Mrs. Leslie?”

Lumley looked delightedly at the speaker, and then glanced at Evelyn; but Mrs. Leslie said very gravely, “No, *we* shall feel too much in leaving this dear place to be gay companions for Lord Vargrave. We shall all meet at dinner; or,” she added, after a pause, “if this be uncourteous to Lord Vargrave, suppose Evelyn and myself take his carriage, and he accompanies you?”

“Agreed,” said Mrs. Merton, quietly; “and now I will just go and see about the strawberry-plants and slips — it was so kind in you, dear Lady Vargrave, to think of them.”

An hour had elapsed, and Evelyn was gone! She had left her maiden home, she had wept her last farewell on her

mother's bosom, the sound of the carriage-wheels had died away; but still Lady Vargrave lingered on the threshold, still she gazed on the spot where the last glimpse of Evelyn had been caught. A sense of dreariness and solitude passed into her soul: the very sunlight, the spring, the songs of the birds, made loneliness more desolate.

Mechanically, at last, she moved away, and with slow steps and downcast eyes passed through the favourite walk that led into the quiet burial-ground. The gate closed upon her, and now the lawn, the gardens, the haunts of Evelyn, were solitary as the desert itself; but the daisy opened to the sun, and the bee murmured along the blossoms, not the less blithely for the absence of all human life. In the bosom of Nature there beats no heart for man!

BOOK II.

— ἔτος ἦλθε, περιπλομένων ἐνιαυτῶν
Τῷ οἱ ἐπεκλώσατο θεοί, οἰκόνδε νέεσθαι,
Εἰς Ἰθάκην, οὐδ' ἔνθα πεφυγμένος ἦεν ἀέθλων.

HOMER: *Od.* lib. i, 16.

“The hour arrived — years having rolled away —
When his return the Gods no more delay.
Lo! Ithaca the Fates award; and there
New trials meet the Wanderer.”

CHAPTER I.

THERE is continual spring and harvest here —
Continual, both meeting at one time;
For both the boughs do laughing blossoms bear,
And with fresh colours deck the wanton prime;
And eke at once the heavy trees they climb,
Which seem to labour under their fruit's load.
SPENSER: *The Garden of Adonis.*

Vis boni
In ipsa inesset forma.¹ — TERENCE.

BEAUTY, thou art twice blessed; thou blessest the gazer and the possessor; often at once the effect and the cause of goodness! A sweet disposition, a lovely soul, an affectionate nature, will speak in the eyes, the lips, the brow, and become the cause of beauty. On the other hand, they who have a gift that commands love, a key that opens all hearts, are ordinarily inclined to look with happy eyes upon the world, — to be cheerful and serene, to hope and to confide. There is more wisdom than the vulgar dream of in our admiration of a fair face.

¹ “Even in beauty there exists the power of virtue.”

Evelyn Cameron was beautiful, — a beauty that came from the heart, and went to the heart; a beauty, the very spirit of which was love! Love smiled on her dimpled lips, it reposed on her open brow, it played in the profuse and careless ringlets of darkest yet sunniest auburn, which a breeze could lift from her delicate and virgin cheek; Love, in all its tenderness, in all its kindness, its unsuspecting truth, — Love coloured every thought, murmured in her low melodious voice, in all its symmetry and glorious womanhood. Love swelled the swan-like neck, and moulded the rounded limb.

She was just the kind of person that takes the judgment by storm: whether gay or grave, there was so charming and irresistible a grace about her. She seemed born, not only to captivate the giddy, but to turn the heads of the sage. Roxalana was nothing to her. How, in the obscure hamlet of Brook-Green, she had learned all the arts of pleasing it is impossible to say. In her arch smile, the pretty toss of her head, the half shyness, half freedom, of her winning ways, it was as if Nature had made her to delight one heart, and torment all others.

Without being learned, the mind of Evelyn was cultivated and well informed. Her heart, perhaps, helped to instruct her understanding; for by a kind of intuition she could appreciate all that was beautiful and elevated. Her unvitiated and guileless taste had a logic of its own: no schoolman had ever a quicker penetration into truth, no critic ever more readily detected the meretricious and the false. The book that Evelyn could admire was sure to be stamped with the impress of the noble, the lovely, or the true!

But Evelyn had faults, — the faults of her age; or, rather, she had tendencies that might conduce to error. She was of so generous a nature that the very thought of sacrificing herself for another had a charm. She ever acted from impulse, — impulses pure and good, but often rash and imprudent. She was yielding to weakness, persuaded into anything, so sensitive, that even a cold look from one moderately liked cut her to the heart; and by the sympathy that accompanies sensitiveness, no pain to her was so great as the thought of giv-

ing pain to another. Hence it was that Vargrave might form reasonable hopes of his ultimate success. It was a dangerous constitution for happiness! How many chances must combine to preserve to the mid-day of characters like this the sunshine of their dawn! The butterfly that seems the child of the summer and the flowers — what wind will not chill its mirth, what touch will not brush away its hues?

CHAPTER II.

THESE, on a general survey, are the modes
Of pulpit oratory which agree
With no unlettered audience. — POLWHELE.

MRS. LESLIE had returned from her visit to the rectory to her own home, and Evelyn had now been some weeks at Mrs. Merton's. As was natural, she had grown in some measure reconciled and resigned to her change of abode. In fact, no sooner did she pass Mrs. Merton's threshold, than, for the first time, she was made aware of her consequence in life.

The Rev. Mr. Merton was a man of the nicest perception in all things appertaining to worldly consideration. The second son of a very wealthy baronet (who was the first commoner of his county) and of the daughter of a rich and highly-descended peer, Mr. Merton had been brought near enough to rank and power to appreciate all their advantages. In early life he had been something of a "tuft-hunter;" but as his understanding was good and his passions not very strong, he had soon perceived that that vessel of clay, a young man with a moderate fortune, cannot long sail down the same stream with the metal vessels of rich earls and extravagant dandies. Besides, he was destined for the Church — because there was one of the finest livings in England in the family. He therefore took orders at six-and-twenty; married Mrs. Leslie's daughter, who had thirty thousand pounds: and settled at the

rectory of Merton, within a mile of the family seat. He became a very respectable and extremely popular man. He was singularly hospitable, and built a new wing — containing a large dining-room and six capital bed-rooms — to the rectory, which had now much more the appearance of a country villa than a country parsonage. His brother, succeeding to the estates, and residing chiefly in the neighbourhood, became, like his father before him, member for the county, and was one of the country gentlemen most looked up to in the House of Commons. A sensible and frequent, though uncommonly prosy speaker, singularly independent (for he had a clear fourteen thousand pounds a year, and did not desire office), and valuing himself on not being a party man, so that his vote on critical questions was often a matter of great doubt, and, therefore, of great moment, Sir John Merton gave considerable importance to the Rev. Charles Merton. The latter kept up all the more select of his old London acquaintances; and few country houses, at certain seasons of the year, were filled more aristocratically than the pleasant rectory-house. Mr. Merton, indeed, contrived to make the Hall a reservoir for the parsonage, and periodically drafted off the *élite* of the visitors at the former to spend a few days at the latter. This was the more easily done, as his brother was a widower, and his conversation was all of one sort, — the state of the nation and the agricultural interest. Mr. Merton was upon very friendly terms with his brother, looked after the property in the absence of Sir John, kept up the family interest, was an excellent electioneerer, a good speaker at a pinch, an able magistrate, — a man, in short, most useful in the county; on the whole, he was more popular than his brother, and almost as much looked up to — perhaps, because he was much less ostentatious. He had very good taste, had the Rev. Charles Merton! — his table plentiful, but plain — his manners affable to the low, though agreeably sycophantic to the high; and there was nothing about him that ever wounded self-love. To add to the attractions of his house, his wife, simple and good-tempered, could talk with anybody, take off the bores, and leave people to be comfortable in their own way: while he

had a large family of fine children of all ages, that had long given easy and constant excuse under the name of "little children's parties," for getting up an impromptu dance or a gypsy dinner, — enlivening the neighbourhood, in short. Caroline was the eldest; then came a son, attached to a foreign ministry, and another, who, though only nineteen, was a private secretary to one of our Indian satraps. The acquaintance of these young gentlemen, thus engaged, it was therefore Evelyn's misfortune to lose the advantage of cultivating, — a loss which both Mr. and Mrs. Merton assured her was very much to be regretted. But to make up to her for such a privation there were two lovely little girls, one ten, and the other seven years old, who fell in love with Evelyn at first sight. Caroline was one of the beauties of the county, clever and conversable, "drew young men," and set the fashion to young ladies, especially when she returned from spending the season with Lady Elizabeth.

It was a delightful family!

In person, Mr. Merton was of the middle height; fair, and inclined to stoutness, with small features, beautiful teeth, and great suavity of address. Mindful still of the time when he had been "about town," he was very particular in his dress: his black coat, neatly relieved in the evening by a white underwaistcoat, and a shirt-front admirably plaited, with plain studs of dark enamel, his well-cut trousers, and elaborately polished shoes — he was good-humouredly vain of his feet and hands — won for him the common praise of the dandies (who occasionally honoured him with a visit to shoot his game, and flirt with his daughter), "That old Merton was a most gentlemanlike fellow — so d — neat for a parson!"

Such, mentally, morally, and physically, was the Rev. Charles Merton, rector of Merton, brother of Sir John, and possessor of an income that, what with his rich living, his wife's fortune, and his own, which was not inconsiderable, amounted to between four and five thousand pounds a year, which income, managed with judgment as well as liberality, could not fail to secure to him all the good things of this world, — the respect of his friends amongst the rest. Caro-

line was right when she told Evelyn that her papa was very different from a mere country parson.

Now this gentleman could not fail to see all the claims that Evelyn might fairly advance upon the esteem, nay, the veneration of himself and family: a young beauty, with a fortune of about a quarter of a million, was a phenomenon that might fairly be called celestial. Her pretensions were enhanced by her engagement to Lord Vargrave, — an engagement which might be broken; so that, as he interpreted it, the *worst* that could happen to the young lady was to marry an able and rising Minister of State, — a peer of the realm; but she was perfectly free to marry a still greater man, if she could find him; and who knows but what perhaps the *attaché*, if he could get leave of absence? Mr. Merton was too sensible to pursue that thought further for the present.

The good man was greatly shocked at the too familiar manner in which Mrs. Merton spoke to this high-fated heiress, at Evelyn's travelling so far without her own maid, at her very primitive wardrobe — poor, ill-used child! Mr. Merton was a connoisseur in ladies' dress. It was quite painful to see that the unfortunate girl had been so neglected. Lady Vargrave must be a very strange person. He inquired compassionately whether she was allowed any pocket money; and finding, to his relief, that in that respect Miss Cameron was munificently supplied, he suggested that a proper abigail should be immediately engaged; that proper orders to Madame Devy should be immediately transmitted to London, with one of Evelyn's dresses, as a pattern for nothing but length and breadth. He almost stamped with vexation when he heard that Evelyn had been placed in one of the neat little rooms generally appropriated to young lady visitors.

"She is quite contented, my dear Mr. Merton; she is so simple; she has not been brought up in the style you think for."

"Mrs. Merton," said the rector, with great solemnity, "Miss Cameron may know no better now; but what will she think of us hereafter? It is my maxim to recollect what people will be, and show them that respect which may leave pleasing im-

pressions when they have it in their power to show us civility in return."

With many apologies, which quite overwhelmed poor Evelyn, she was transferred from the little chamber, with its French bed and bamboo-coloured washhand-stand, to an apartment with a buhl wardrobe and a four-post bed with green silk curtains, usually appropriated to the regular Christmas visitant, the Dowager Countess of Chipperton. A pretty morning room communicated with the sleeping apartment, and thence a private staircase conducted into the gardens. The whole family were duly impressed and re-impressed with her importance. No queen could be made more of. Evelyn mistook it all for pure kindness, and returned the hospitality with an affection that extended to the whole family, but particularly to the two little girls, and a beautiful black spaniel. Her dresses came down from London; her abigail arrived; the buhl wardrobe was duly filled, — and Evelyn at last learned that it is a fine thing to be rich. An account of all these proceedings was forwarded to Lady Vargrave, in a long and most complacent letter, by the rector himself. The answer was short, but it contented the excellent clergyman; for it approved of all he had done, and begged that Miss Cameron might have everything that seemed proper to her station.

By the same post came two letters to Evelyn herself, — one from Lady Vargrave, one from the curate. They transported her from the fine room and the buhl wardrobe to the cottage and the lawn; and the fine abigail, when she came to dress her young lady's hair, found her weeping.

It was a matter of great regret to the rector that it was that time of year when — precisely because the country is most beautiful — every one worth knowing is in town. Still, however, some stray guests found their way to the rectory for a day or two, and still there were some aristocratic old families in the neighbourhood, who never went up to London: so that two days in the week the rector's wine flowed, the whist-tables were set out, and the piano called into requisition.

Evelyn — the object of universal attention and admiration

— was put at her ease by her station itself; for good manners come like an instinct to those on whom the world smiles. Insensibly she acquired self-possession and the smoothness of society; and if her child-like playfulness broke out from all conventional restraint, it only made more charming and brilliant the great heiress, whose delicate and fairy cast of beauty so well became her graceful *abandon* of manner, and who looked so unequivocally ladylike to the eyes that rested on Madame Devy's blondes and satins.

Caroline was not so gay as she had been at the cottage. Something seemed to weigh upon her spirits: she was often moody and thoughtful. She was the only one in the family not good-tempered; and her peevish replies to her parents, when no visitor imposed a check on the family circle, inconceivably pained Evelyn, and greatly contrasted the flow of spirits which distinguished her when she found somebody worth listening to. Still Evelyn — who, where she once liked, found it difficult to withdraw regard — sought to overlook Caroline's blemishes, and to persuade herself of a thousand good qualities below the surface; and her generous nature found constant opportunity of venting itself in costly gifts, selected from the London parcels, with which the officious Mr. Merton relieved the monotony of the rectory. These gifts Caroline could not refuse without paining her young friend. She took them reluctantly, for, to do her justice, Caroline, though ambitious, was not mean.

Thus time passed in the rectory, in gay variety and constant entertainment; and all things combined to spoil the heiress, if, indeed, goodness ever is spoiled by kindness and prosperity. Is it to the frost or to the sunshine that the flower opens its petals, or the fruit ripens from the blossom?

CHAPTER III.

Rod. How sweet these solitary places are !

Ped. What strange musick
Was that we heard afar off ?

Curio. We 've told you what he is, what time we 've sought him,
His nature and his name.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER: *The Pilgrim.*

ONE day, as the ladies were seated in Mrs. Merton's morning-room, Evelyn, who had been stationed by the window hearing the little Cecilia go through the French verbs, and had just finished that agreeable task, exclaimed, —

“Do tell me to whom that old house belongs, with the picturesque gable-end and Gothic turrets, there, just peeping through the trees, — I have always forgot to ask you.”

“Oh, my dear Miss Cameron,” said Mrs. Merton, “that is Burleigh; have you not been there? How stupid in Caroline not to show it to you ! It is one of the lions of the place. It belongs to a man you have often heard of, — Mr. Maltravers.”

“Indeed !” cried Evelyn; and she gazed with new interest on the gray melancholy pile, as the sunshine brought it into strong contrast with the dark pines around it. “And Mr. Maltravers himself — ?”

“Is still abroad, I believe; though I did hear the other day that he was shortly expected at Burleigh. It is a curious old place, though much neglected. I believe, indeed, it has not been furnished since the time of Charles the First. (Cissy, my love, don't stoop so.) Very gloomy, in my opinion; and not any fine room in the house, except the library, which was once a chapel. However, people come miles to see it.”

“Will you go there to-day?” said Caroline, languidly; “it is a very pleasant walk through the glebe-land and the wood, — not above half a mile by the foot-path.”

“I should like it so much.”

"Yes," said Mrs. Merton, "and you had better go before he returns, — he is so strange. He does not allow it to be seen when he is down. But, indeed, he has only been once at the old place since he was of age. (Sophy, you will tear Miss Cameron's scarf to pieces; do be quiet, child.) That was before he was a great man; he was then very odd, saw no society, only dined once with us, though Mr. Merton paid him every attention. They show the room in which he wrote his books."

"I remember him very well, though I was then but a child," said Caroline, — "a handsome, thoughtful face."

"Did you think so, my dear? Fine eyes and teeth, certainly, and a commanding figure, but nothing more."

"Well," said Caroline, "if you like to go, Evelyn, I am at your service."

"And — I — Evy, dear — I — may go," said Cecilia, clinging to Evelyn.

"And me, too," lisped Sophia, the youngest hope, — "there's such a pretty peacock."

"Oh, yes, they may go, Mrs. Merton, we'll take such care of them."

"Very well, my dear; Miss Cameron quite spoils you."

Evelyn tripped away to put on her bonnet, and the children ran after her, clapping their hands, — they could not bear to lose sight of her for a moment.

"Caroline," said Mrs. Merton, affectionately, "are you not well? You have seemed pale lately, and not in your usual spirits."

"Oh, yes, I'm well enough," answered Caroline, rather peevishly; "but this place is so dull now; very provoking that Lady Elizabeth does not go to London this year."

"My dear, it will be gayer, I hope, in July, when the races at Knaresdean begin; and Lord Vargrave has promised to come."

"Has Lord Vargrave written to you lately?"

"No, my dear."

"Very odd."

"Does Evelyn ever talk of him?"

"Not much," said Caroline, rising and quitting the room.

It was a most cheerful exhilarating day, — the close of sweet May; the hedges were white with blossoms; a light breeze rustled the young leaves; the butterflies had ventured forth, and the children chased them over the grass, as Evelyn and Caroline, who walked much too slow for her companion (Evelyn longed to run), followed them soberly towards Burleigh.

They passed the glebe-fields; and a little bridge, thrown over a brawling rivulet, conducted them into a wood.

"This stream," said Caroline, "forms the boundary between my uncle's estates and those of Mr. Maltravers. It must be very unpleasant to so proud a man as Mr. Maltravers is said to be, to have the land of another proprietor so near his house. He could hear my uncle's gun from his very drawing-room. However, Sir John takes care not to molest him. On the other side, the Burleigh estates extend for some miles; indeed, Mr. Maltravers is the next great proprietor to my uncle in this part of the county. Very strange that he does not marry! There, now you can see the house."

The mansion lay somewhat low, with hanging woods in the rear: and the old-fashioned fish-ponds gleaming in the sunshine and overshadowed by gigantic trees increased the venerable stillness of its aspect. Ivy and innumerable creepers covered one side of the house; and long weeds cumbered the deserted road.

"It is sadly neglected," said Caroline; "and was so, even in the last owner's life. Mr. Maltravers inherits the place from his mother's uncle. We may as well enter the house by the private way. The front entrance is kept locked up."

Winding by a path that conducted into a flower-garden, divided from the park by a ha-ha, over which a plank and a small gate, rusting off its hinges, were placed, Caroline led the way towards the building. At this point of view it presented a large bay window that by a flight of four steps led into the garden. On one side rose a square, narrow turret, surmounted by a gilt dome and quaint weathercock, below the architrave of which was a sun-dial, set in the stonework, and

another dial stood in the garden, with the common and beautiful motto, —

“Non numero horas, nisi serenas!”¹

On the other side of the bay window a huge buttress cast its mass of shadow. There was something in the appearance of the whole place that invited to contemplation and repose, — something almost monastic. The gayety of the teeming spring-time could not divest the spot of a certain sadness, not displeasing, however, whether to the young, to whom there is a luxury in the vague sentiment of melancholy, or to those who, having known real griefs, seek for an anodyne in meditation and memory. The low lead-coloured door, set deep in the turret, was locked, and the bell beside it broken. Caroline turned impatiently away. “We must go round to the other side,” said she, “and try to make the deaf old man hear us.”

“Oh, Carry!” cried Cecilia, “the great window is open;” and she ran up the steps.

“That is lucky,” said Caroline; and the rest followed Cecilia.

Evelyn now stood within the library of which Mrs. Merton had spoken. It was a large room, about fifty feet in length, and proportionably wide; somewhat dark, for the light came only from the one large window through which they entered; and though the window rose to the cornice of the ceiling, and took up one side of the apartment, the daylight was subdued by the heaviness of the stonework in which the narrow panes were set, and by the glass stained with armorial bearings in the upper part of the casement. The bookcases, too, were of the dark oak which so much absorbs the light; and the gilding, formerly meant to relieve them, was discoloured by time.

The room was almost disproportionably lofty; the ceiling, elaborately coved, and richly carved with grotesque masks, preserved the Gothic character of the age in which it had been devoted to a religious purpose. Two fireplaces, with high chimney-pieces of oak, in which were inserted two portraits, broke the symmetry of the tall bookcases. In one of

¹ “I number not the hours, unless sunny.”

these fireplaces were half-burnt logs; and a huge armchair, with a small reading-desk beside it, seemed to bespeak the recent occupation of the room. On the fourth side, opposite the window, the wall was covered with faded tapestry, representing the meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba; the arras was nailed over doors on either hand, — the chinks between the door and the wall serving, in one instance, to cut off in the middle his wise majesty, who was making a low bow; while in the other it took the ground from under the wanton queen, just as she was descending from her chariot.

Near the window stood a grand piano, the only modern article in the room, save one of the portraits, presently to be described. On all this Evelyn gazed silently and devoutly: she had naturally that reverence for genius which is common to the enthusiastic and young; and there is, even to the dull-est, a certain interest in the homes of those who have implanted within us a new thought. But here there was, she imagined, a rare and singular harmony between the place and the mental characteristics of the owner. She fancied she now better understood the shadowy and metaphysical repose of thought that had distinguished the earlier writings of Maltravers, — the writings composed or planned in this still retreat.

But what particularly caught her attention was one of the two portraits that adorned the mantelpieces. The further one was attired in the rich and fanciful armour of the time of Elizabeth; the head bare, the helmet on a table on which the hand rested. It was a handsome and striking countenance; and an inscription announced it to be a Digby, an ancestor of Maltravers.

But the other was a beautiful girl of about eighteen, in the now almost antiquated dress of forty years ago. The features were delicate, but the colours somewhat faded, and there was something mournful in the expression. A silk curtain, drawn on one side, seemed to denote how carefully it was prized by the possessor.

Evelyn turned for explanation to her cicerone.

"This is the second time I have seen that picture," said

Caroline; "for it is only by great entreaty and as a mysterious favour that the old housekeeper draws aside the veil. Some touch of sentiment in Maltravers makes him regard it as sacred. It is the picture of his mother before she married; she died in giving him birth."

Evelyn sighed; how well she understood the sentiment which seemed to Caroline so eccentric! The countenance fascinated her; the eye seemed to follow her as she turned.

"As a proper pendant to this picture," said Caroline, "he ought to have dismissed the effigies of yon warlike gentleman, and replaced it by one of poor Lady Florence Lascelles, for whose loss he is said to have quitted his country: but, perhaps, it was the loss of her fortune."

"How can you say so? — fie!" cried Evelyn, with a burst of generous indignation.

"Ah, my dear, you heiresses have a fellow-feeling with each other! Nevertheless, clever men are less sentimental than we deem them. Heigho! this quiet room gives me the spleen, I fancy."

"Dearest Evy," whispered Cecilia, "I think you have a look of that pretty picture, only you are much prettier. Do take off your bonnet; your hair just falls down like hers."

Evelyn shook her head gravely; but the spoiled child hastily untied the ribbons and snatched away the hat, and Evelyn's sunny ringlets fell down in beautiful disorder. There was no resemblance between Evelyn and the portrait, except in the colour of the hair, and the careless fashion it now by chance assumed. Yet Evelyn was pleased to think that a likeness did exist, though Caroline declared it was a most unflattering compliment.

"I don't wonder," said the latter, changing the theme, — "I don't wonder Mr. Maltravers lives so little in this 'Castle Dull;' yet it might be much improved. French windows and plate-glass, for instance; and if those lumbering bookshelves and horrid old chimney-pieces were removed and the ceiling painted white and gold like that in my uncle's saloon, and a rich, lively paper, instead of the tapestry, it would really make a very fine ballroom."

"Let us have a dance here now," cried Cecilia. "Come, stand up, Sophy;" and the children began to practise a waltz step, tumbling over each other, and laughing in full glee.

"Hush, hush!" said Evelyn, softly. She had never before checked the children's mirth, and she could not tell why she did so now.

"I suppose the old butler has been entertaining the bailiff here," said Caroline, pointing to the remains of the fire.

"And is this the room he chiefly inhabited, — the room that you say they show as his?"

"No; that tapestry door to the right leads into a little study where he wrote." So saying, Caroline tried to open the door, but it was locked from within. She then opened the other door, which showed a long wainscoted passage, hung with rusty pikes, and a few breastplates of the time of the Parliamentary Wars. "This leads to the main body of the house," said Caroline, "from which the room we are now in and the little study are completely detached, having, as you know, been the chapel in popish times. I have heard that Sir Kenelm Digby, an ancestral connection of the present owner, first converted them into their present use, and, in return, built the village church on the other side of the park."

Sir Kenelm Digby, the old cavalier philosopher! — a new name of interest to consecrate the place! Evelyn could have lingered all day in the room; and perhaps as an excuse for a longer sojourn, hastened to the piano — it was open — she ran her fairy fingers over the keys, and the sound from the untuned and neglected instrument thrilled wild and spiritlike through the melancholy chamber.

"Oh, do sing us something, Evy," cried Cecilia, running up to, and drawing a chair to, the instrument.

"Do, Evelyn," said Caroline, languidly; "it will serve to bring one of the servants to us, and save us a journey to the offices."

It was just what Evelyn wished. Some verses, which her mother especially loved, verses written by Maltravers upon returning after absence to his own home, had rushed into her mind as she had touched the keys. They were appropriate

to the place, and had been beautifully set to music. So the children hushed themselves, and nestled at her feet; and after a little prelude, keeping the accompaniment under, that the spoiled instrument might not mar the sweet words and sweeter voice, she began the song.

Meanwhile in the adjoining room, the little study which Caroline had spoken of, sat the owner of the house! He had returned suddenly and unexpectedly the previous night. The old steward was in attendance at the moment, full of apologies, congratulations, and gossip; and Maltravers, grown a stern and haughty man, was already impatiently turning away, when he heard the sudden sound of the children's laughter and loud voices in the room beyond. Maltravers frowned.

"What impertinence is this?" said he in a tone that, though very calm, made the steward quake in his shoes.

"I don't know, really, your honour; there be so many grand folks come to see the house in the fine weather, that —"

"And you permit your master's house to be a raree-show? You do well, sir."

"If your honour were more amongst us, there might be more discipline like," said the steward, stoutly; "but no one in my time has cared so little for the old place as those it belongs to."

"Fewer words with me, sir," said Maltravers, haughtily; "and now go and inform those people that I am returned, and wish for no guests but those I invite myself."

"Sir!"

"Do you not hear me? Say that if it so please them, these old ruins are my property, and are not to be jobbed out to the insolence of public curiosity. Go, sir."

"But — I beg pardon, your honour — if they be great folks?"

"Great folks! — great! Ay, there it is. Why, if they be great folks, they have great houses of their own, Mr. Justis."

The steward stared. "Perhaps, your honour," he put in, deprecatingly, "they be Mr. Merton's family: they come very often when the London gentlemen are with them."

"Merton! — oh, the cringing parson. Harkye! one word more with me, sir, and you quit my service to-morrow."

Mr. Justis lifted his eyes and hands to heaven; but there was something in his master's voice and look which checked reply, and he turned slowly to the door — when a voice of such heavenly sweetness was heard without that it arrested his own step and made the stern Maltravers start in his seat. He held up his hand to the steward to delay his errand, and listened, charmed and spell-bound. His own words came on his ear, — words long unfamiliar to him, and at first but imperfectly remembered; words connected with the early and virgin years of poetry and aspiration; words that were as the ghosts of thoughts now far too gentle for his altered soul. He bowed down his head, and the dark shade left his brow.

The song ceased. Maltravers moved with a sigh, and his eyes rested on the form of the steward with his hand on the door.

"Shall I give your honour's message?" said Mr. Justis, gravely.

"No; take care for the future; leave me now."

Mr. Justis made one leg, and then, well pleased, took to both.

"Well," thought he, as he departed, "how foreign parts do spoil a gentleman! so mild as he was once! I must botch up the accounts, I see, — the squire has grown sharp."

As Evelyn concluded her song, she — whose charm in singing was that she sang from the heart — was so touched by the melancholy music of the air and words, that her voice faltered, and the last line died inaudibly on her lips.

The children sprang up and kissed her.

"Oh," cried Cecilia, "there is the beautiful peacock!" And there, indeed, on the steps without — perhaps attracted by the music — stood the picturesque bird. The children ran out to greet their old favourite, who was extremely tame; and presently Cecilia returned.

"Oh, Carry! do see what beautiful horses are coming up the park!"

Caroline, who was a good rider, and fond of horses, and

whose curiosity was always aroused by things connected with show and station, suffered the little girl to draw her into the garden. Two grooms, each mounted on a horse of the pure Arabian breed, and each leading another, swathed and bandaged, were riding slowly up the road; and Caroline was so attracted by the novel appearance of the animals in a place so deserted that she followed the children towards them, to learn who could possibly be their enviable owner. Evelyn, forgotten for the moment, remained alone. She was pleased at being so, and once more turned to the picture which had so attracted her before. The mild eyes fixed on her, with an expression that recalled to her mind her own mother.

"And," thought she, as she gazed, "this fair creature did not live to know the fame of her son, to rejoice in his success, or to soothe his grief. And he, that son, a disappointed and solitary exile in distant lands, while strangers stand within his deserted hall!"

The images she had conjured up moved and absorbed her; and she continued to stand before the picture, gazing upward with moistened eyes. It was a beautiful vision as she thus stood, with her delicate bloom, her luxuriant hair (for the hat was not yet replaced), her elastic form, so full of youth and health and hope, — the living form beside the faded canvas of the dead, once youthful, tender, lovely as herself! Evelyn turned away with a sigh; the sigh was re-echoed yet more deeply. She started: the door that led to the study was opened, and in the aperture was the figure of a man in the prime of life. His hair, still luxuriant as in his earliest youth, though darkened by the suns of the East, curled over a forehead of majestic expanse. The high and proud features, that well became a stature above the ordinary standard; the pale but bronzed complexion; the large eyes of deepest blue, shaded by dark brows and lashes; and more than all, that expression at once of passion and repose which characterizes the old Italian portraits, and seems to denote the inscrutable power that experience imparts to intellect, constituted an *ensemble* which, if not faultlessly handsome, was eminently striking, and formed at once to interest and command. It

was a face, once seen, never to be forgotten; it was a face that had long, half unconsciously, haunted Evelyn's young dreams; it was a face she had seen before, though, then younger and milder and fairer, it wore a different aspect.

Evelyn stood rooted to the spot, feeling herself blush to her very temples, — an enchanting picture of bashful confusion and innocent alarm.

"Do not let me regret my return," said the stranger, approaching after a short pause, and with much gentleness in his voice and smile; "and think that the owner is doomed to scare away the fair spirits that haunted the spot in his absence."

"The owner!" repeated Evelyn, almost inaudibly, and in increased embarrassment; "are you then the — the —"

"Yes," courteously interrupted the stranger, seeing her confusion, "my name is Maltravers; and I am to blame for not having informed you of my sudden return, or for now trespassing on your presence. But you see my excuse;" and he pointed to the instrument. "You have the magic that draws even the serpent from his hole. But you are not alone?"

"Oh, no! no, indeed! Miss Merton is with me. I know not where she is gone. I will seek her."

"Miss Merton! You are not then one of that family?"

"No, only a guest. I will find her; she must apologize for us. We were not aware that you were here, — indeed we were not."

"That is a cruel excuse," said Maltravers, smiling at her eagerness: and the smile and the look reminded her yet more forcibly of the time when he had carried her in his arms and soothed her suffering and praised her courage and pressed the kiss almost of a lover on her hand. At that thought she blushed yet more deeply, and yet more eagerly turned to escape.

Maltravers did not seek to detain her, but silently followed her steps. She had scarcely gained the window, before little Cecilia scampered in, crying, —

"Only think! Mr. Maltravers has come back, and brought such beautiful horses!"

Cecilia stopped abruptly, as she caught sight of the stranger; and the next moment Caroline herself appeared. Her worldly experience and quick sense saw immediately what had chanced; and she hastened to apologize to Maltravers, and congratulate him on his return, with an ease that astonished poor Evelyn, and by no means seemed appreciated by Maltravers himself. He replied with brief and haughty courtesy.

"My father," continued Caroline, "will be so glad to hear you are come back. He will hasten to pay you his respects, and apologize for his truants. But I have not formally introduced you to my fellow-offender. My dear, let me present to you one whom Fame has already made known to you; Mr. Maltravers, Miss Cameron, step-daughter," she added in a lower voice, "to the late Lord Vargrave."

At the first part of this introduction Maltravers frowned; at the last he forgot all displeasure.

"Is it possible? I *thought* I had seen you before, but in a dream. Ah, then we are not quite strangers!"

Evelyn's eye met his, and though she coloured and strove to look grave, a half smile brought out the dimples that played round her arch lips.

"But you do not remember me?" added Maltravers.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Evelyn, with a sudden impulse; and then checked herself.

Caroline came to her friend's relief.

"What is this? You surprise me; where did you ever see Mr. Maltravers before?"

"I can answer that question, Miss Merton. When Miss Cameron was but a child, as high as my little friend here, an accident on the road procured me her acquaintance; and the sweetness and fortitude she then displayed left an impression on me not worn out even to this day. And thus we meet again," added Maltravers, in a muttered voice, as to himself. "How strange a thing life is!"

"Well," said Miss Merton, "we must intrude on you no more, — you have so much to do. I am so sorry Sir John is not down to welcome you; but I hope we shall be good neighbours. *Au revoir!*"

And, fancying herself most charming, Caroline bowed, smiled, and walked off with her train. Maltravers paused irresolute. If Evelyn had looked back, he would have accompanied them home; but Evelyn did not look back, — and he stayed.

Miss Merton rallied her young friend unmercifully, as they walked homeward, and she extracted a very brief and imperfect history of the adventure that had formed the first acquaintance, and of the interview by which it had been renewed. But Evelyn did not heed her; and the moment they arrived at the rectory, she hastened to shut herself in her room, and write the account of her adventure to her mother. How often, in her girlish reveries, had she thought of that incident, that stranger! And now, by such a chance, and after so many years, to meet the Unknown by his own hearth! and that Unknown to be Maltravers! It was as if a dream had come true. While she was yet musing — and the letter not yet begun — she heard the sound of joy-bells in the distance. At once she divined the cause; it was the welcome of the wanderer to his solitary home!

CHAPTER IV.

*MAIS en connaissant votre condition naturelle, usez des moyens qui lui sont propres, et ne prétendez pas régner par une autre voie que par celle qui vous fait roi.*¹ — PASCAL.

IN the heart as in the ocean, the great tides ebb and flow. The waves which had once urged on the spirit of Ernest Maltravers to the rocks and shoals of active life had long since receded back upon the calm depths, and left the strand bare. With a melancholy and disappointed mind, he had

¹ "But in understanding your natural condition, use the means which are proper to it; and pretend not to govern by any other way than by that which constitutes you governor."

quitted the land of his birth; and new scenes, strange and wild, had risen before his wandering gaze. Wearied with civilization, and sated with many of the triumphs for which civilized men drudge and toil, and disquiet themselves in vain, he had plunged amongst hordes, scarce redeemed from primeval barbarism. The adventures through which he had passed, and in which life itself could only be preserved by wary vigilance and ready energies, had forced him, for a while, from the indulgence of morbid contemplations. His heart, indeed, had been left inactive; but his intellect and his physical powers had been kept in hourly exercise. He returned to the world of his equals with a mind laden with the treasures of a various and vast experience, and with much of the same gloomy moral as that which, on emerging from the Catacombs, assured the restless speculations of Rasselas of the vanity of human life and the folly of moral aspirations.

Ernest Maltravers, never a faultless or completed character, falling short in practice of his own capacities, moral and intellectual, from his very desire to overpass the limits of the Great and Good, was seemingly as far as heretofore from the grand secret of life. It was not so in reality; his mind had acquired what before it wanted, — *hardness*; and we are nearer to true virtue and true happiness when we demand too little from men than when we exact too much.

Nevertheless, partly from the strange life that had thrown him amongst men whom safety itself made it necessary to command despotically, partly from the habit of power and disdain of the world, his nature was incrustated with a stern imperiousness of manner, often approaching to the harsh and morose, though beneath it lurked generosity and benevolence.

Many of his younger feelings, more amiable and complex, had settled into one predominant quality, which more or less had always characterized him, — *Pride*! Self-esteem made inactive, and Ambition made discontented, usually engender haughtiness. In Maltravers this quality, which, properly controlled and duly softened, is the essence and life of honour, was carried to a vice. He was perfectly conscious of its excess, but he cherished it as a virtue. Pride had served to

console him in sorrow, and therefore it was a friend; it had supported him when disgusted with fraud, or in resistance to violence, and therefore it was a champion and a fortress. It was a pride of a peculiar sort: it attached itself to no one point in especial, — not to talent, knowledge, mental gifts, still less to the vulgar commonplaces of birth and fortune; it rather resulted from a supreme and wholesale contempt of all other men, and all their objects, — of ambition, of glory, of the hard business of life. His favourite virtue was fortitude; it was on this that he now mainly valued himself. He was proud of his struggles against others, prouder still of conquests over his own passions. He looked upon FATE as the arch enemy against whose attacks we should ever prepare. He fancied that against fate he had thoroughly schooled himself. In the arrogance of his heart he said, "I can defy the future." He believed in the boast of the vain old sage, — "I am a world to myself!" In the wild career through which his later manhood had passed, it is true that he had not carried his philosophy into a rejection of the ordinary world. The shock occasioned by the death of Florence yielded gradually to time and change; and he had passed from the deserts of Africa and the East to the brilliant cities of Europe. But neither his heart nor his reason had ever again been enslaved by his passions. Never again had he known the softness of affection. Had he done so, the ice had been thawed, and the fountain had flowed once more into the great deeps. He had returned to England, — he scarce knew wherefore, or with what intent, certainly not with any idea of entering again upon the occupations of active life; it was, perhaps, only the weariness of foreign scenes and unfamiliar tongues, and the vague, unsettled desire of change, that brought him back to the fatherland. But he did not allow so unphilosophical a cause to himself: and, what was strange, he would not allow one much more amiable, and which was, perhaps, the truer cause, — the increasing age and infirmities of his old guardian, Cleveland, who prayed him affectionately to return. Maltravers did not like to believe that his heart was still so kind. Singular form of pride! No, he rather sought to per-

suade himself that he intended to sell Burleigh, to arrange his affairs finally, and then quit forever his native land. To prove to himself that this was the case, he had intended at Dover to hurry at once to Burleigh, and merely write to Cleveland that he was returned to England. But his heart would not suffer him to enjoy this cruel luxury of self-mortification, and his horses' heads were turned to Richmond when within a stage of London. He had spent two days with the good old man, and those two days had so warmed and softened his feelings that he was quite appalled at his own dereliction from fixed principles! However, he went before Cleveland had time to discover that he was changed; and the old man had promised to visit him shortly.

This, then, was the state of Ernest Maltravers at the age of thirty-six, — an age in which frame and mind are in their fullest perfection; an age in which men begin most keenly to feel that they are citizens. With all his energies braced and strengthened; with his mind stored with profusest gifts; in the vigour of a constitution to which a hardy life had imparted a second and fresher youth; so trained by stern experience as to redeem with an easy effort all the deficiencies and faults which had once resulted from too sensitive an imagination and too high a standard for human actions; formed to render to his race the most brilliant and durable service, and to secure to himself the happiness which results from sobered fancy, a generous heart, and an approving conscience, — here was Ernest Maltravers, backed, too, by the appliances and gifts of birth and fortune, perversely shutting up genius, life, and soul in their own thorny leaves, and refusing to serve the fools and rascals who were formed from the same clay, and gifted by the same God. Morbid and morose philosophy, begot by a proud spirit on a lonely heart!

CHAPTER V.

LET such amongst us as are willing to be children again, if it be only for an hour, resign ourselves to the sweet enchantment that steals upon the spirit when it indulges in the memory of early and innocent enjoyment.

D. L. RICHARDSON.

AT dinner, Caroline's lively recital of their adventures was received with much interest, not only by the Merton family, but by some of the neighbouring gentry who shared the rector's hospitality. The sudden return of any proprietor to his old hereditary seat after a prolonged absence makes some sensation in a provincial neighbourhood. In this case, where the proprietor was still young, unmarried, celebrated, and handsome, the sensation was of course proportionably increased. Caroline and Evelyn were beset by questions, to which the former alone gave any distinct reply. Caroline's account was, on the whole, gracious and favourable, and seemed complimentary to all but Evelyn, who thought that Caroline was a very indifferent portrait-painter.

It seldom happens that a man is a prophet in his own neighbourhood; but Maltravers had been so little in the county, and in his former visit his life had been so secluded, that he was regarded as a stranger. He had neither outshone the establishments nor interfered with the sporting of his fellow-squires; and on the whole, they made just allowance for his habits of distant reserve. Time, and his retirement from the busy scene, long enough to cause him to be missed, not long enough for new favourites to supply his place, had greatly served to mellow and consolidate his reputation, and his country was proud to claim him. Thus (though Maltravers would not have believed it had an angel told him) he was not spoken ill of behind his back: a thousand little anecdotes of his personal habits, of his generosity, independence of spirit, and eccentricity were told. Evelyn listened in rapt

delight to all; she had never passed so pleasant an evening; and she smiled almost gratefully on the rector, who was a man that always followed the stream, when he said with benign affability, "We must really show our distinguished neighbour every attention, — we must be indulgent to his little oddities. His politics are not mine, to be sure; but a man who has a stake in the country has a right to his own opinion, that was always my maxim, — thank Heaven, I am a very moderate man. We must draw him amongst us; it will be our own fault, I am sure, if he is not quite domesticated at the rectory."

"With such attraction, — yes," said the thin curate, timidly bowing to the ladies.

"It would be a nice match for Miss Caroline," whispered an old lady; Caroline overheard, and pouted her pretty lip.

The whist-tables were now set out, the music began, and Maltravers was left in peace.

The next day Mr. Merton rode his pony over to Burleigh. Maltravers was not at home. He left his card, and a note of friendly respect, begging Mr. Maltravers to waive ceremony, and dine with them the next day. Somewhat to the surprise of the rector, he found that the active spirit of Maltravers was already at work. The long-deserted grounds were filled with labourers; the carpenters were busy at the fences; the house looked alive and stirring; the grooms were exercising the horses in the park, — all betokened the return of the absentee. This seemed to denote that Maltravers had come to reside; and the rector thought of Caroline, and was pleased at the notion.

The next day was Cecilia's birthday, — and birthdays were kept at Merton Rectory; the neighbouring children were invited. They were to dine on the lawn, in a large marquee, and to dance in the evening. The hothouses yielded their early strawberries, and the cows, decorated with blue ribbons, were to give syllabubs. The polite Caroline was not greatly fascinated by pleasure of this kind; she graciously appeared at dinner, kissed the prettiest of the children, helped them to soup, and then, having done her duty, retired to her room

to write letters. The children were not sorry, for they were a little afraid of the grand Caroline; and they laughed much more loudly, and made much more noise, when she was gone — and the cake and strawberries appeared.

Evelyn was in her element; she had, as a child, mixed so little with children, she had so often yearned for playmates, she was still so childlike. Besides, she was so fond of Cecilia, she had looked forward with innocent delight to the day; and a week before had taken the carriage to the neighbouring town to return with a carefully concealed basket of toys, — dolls, sashes, and picture-books. But somehow or other, she did not feel so childlike as usual that morning; her heart was away from the pleasure before her, and her smile was at first languid. But in children's mirth there is something so contagious to those who love children; and now, as the party scattered themselves on the grass, and Evelyn opened the basket, and bade them with much gravity keep quiet, and be good children, she was the happiest of the whole group. But she knew how to give pleasure: and the basket was presented to Cecilia, that the little queen of the day might enjoy the luxury of being generous; and to prevent jealousy, the notable expedient of a lottery was suggested.

"Then Evy shall be Fortune!" cried Cecilia; "nobody will be sorry to get anything from Evy, — and if any one is discontented Evy sha'n't kiss her."

Mrs. Merton, whose motherly heart was completely won by Evelyn's kindness to the children, forgot all her husband's lectures, and willingly ticketed the prizes, and wrote the numbers of the lots on slips of paper carefully folded. A large old Indian jar was dragged from the drawing-room and constituted the fated urn; the tickets were deposited therein, and Cecilia was tying the handkerchief round Evelyn's eyes, — while Fortune struggled archly not to be as blind as she ought to be, — and the children, seated in a circle, were in full joy and expectation when there was a sudden pause. The laughter stopped; so did Cissy's little hands. What could it be? Evelyn slipped the bandage, and her eyes rested on Maltravers!

"Well, really, my dear Miss Cameron," said the rector, who was by the side of the intruder, and who, indeed, had just brought him to the spot, "I don't know what these little folks will do to you next."

"I ought rather to be their victim," said Maltravers, good-humouredly; "the fairies always punish us grown-up mortals for trespassing on their revels."

While he spoke, his eyes — those eyes, the most eloquent in the world — dwelt on Evelyn (as, to cover her blushes, she took Cecilia in her arms, and appeared to attend to nothing else) with a look of such admiration and delight as a mortal might well be supposed to cast on some beautiful fairy.

Sophy, a very bold child, ran up to him. "How do, sir?" she lisped, putting up her face to be kissed; "how's the pretty peacock?"

This opportune audacity served at once to renew the charm that had been broken, — to unite the stranger with the children. Here was acquaintance claimed and allowed in an instant. The next moment Maltravers was one of the circle, on the turf with the rest, as gay, and almost as noisy, — that hard, proud man, so disdainful of the trifles of the world!

"But the gentleman must have a prize, too," said Sophy, proud of her tall new friend. "What's your other name; why do you have such a long, hard name?"

"Call me Ernest," said Maltravers.

"Why don't we begin?" cried the children.

"Evy, come, be a good child, miss," said Sophy, as Evelyn, vexed and ashamed, and half ready to cry, resisted the bandage.

Mr. Merton interposed his authority; but the children clamoured, and Evelyn hastily yielded. It was Fortune's duty to draw the tickets from the urn, and give them to each claimant whose name was called; when it came to the turn of Maltravers, the bandage did not conceal the blush and smile of the enchanting goddess, and the hand of the aspirant thrilled as it touched hers.

The children burst into screams of laughter when Cecilia gravely awarded to Maltravers the worst prize in the lot, — a

blue ribbon, — which Sophy, however, greedily insisted on having; but Maltravers would not yield it.

Maltravers remained all day at the rectory, and shared in the ball, — yes, he danced with Evelyn — he, Maltravers, who had never been known to dance since he was twenty-two! The ice was fairly broken, — Maltravers was at home with the Mertons. And when he took his solitary walk to his solitary house — over the little bridge, and through the shadowy wood — astonished, perhaps, with himself, every one of the guests, from the oldest to the youngest, pronounced him delightful. Caroline, perhaps, might have been piqued some months ago that he did not dance with *her*; but now, her heart — such as it was — felt preoccupied.

CHAPTER VI.

L'ESPRIT de l'homme est plus pénétrant que conséquent, et embrasse plus qu'il ne peut lier.¹ — VAUVENARGUES.

AND NOW Maltravers was constantly with the Merton family; there was no need of excuse for familiarity on his part. Mr. Merton, charmed to find his advances not rejected, thrust intimacy upon him.

One day they spent the afternoon at Burleigh, and Evelyn and Caroline finished their survey of the house, — tapestry, and armour, pictures and all. This led to a visit to the Arabian horses. Caroline observed that she was very fond of riding, and went into ecstasies with one of the animals, — the one, of course, with the longest tail. The next day the horse was in the stables at the rectory, and a gallant epistle apologized for the costly gift.

Mr. Merton demurred, but Caroline always had her own way; and so the horse remained (no doubt, in much amaze-

¹ "The spirit of man is more penetrating than logical, and gathers more than it can garner."

ment and disdain) with the parson's pony, and the brown carriage horses. The gift naturally conduced to parties on horseback—it was cruel entirely to separate the Arab from his friends—and how was Evelyn to be left behind?—Evelyn, who had never yet ridden anything more spirited than an old pony! A beautiful little horse belonging to an elderly lady, now growing too stout to ride, was to be sold hard by. Maltravers discovered the treasure, and apprised Mr. Merton of it—he was too delicate to affect liberality to the rich heiress. The horse was bought; nothing could go quieter; Evelyn was not at all afraid. They made two or three little excursions. Sometimes only Mr. Merton and Maltravers accompanied the young ladies, sometimes the party was more numerous. Maltravers appeared to pay equal attention to Caroline and her friend; still Evelyn's inexperience in equestrian matters was an excuse for his being ever by her side. They had a thousand opportunities to converse; and Evelyn now felt more at home with him; her gentle gayety, her fanciful yet chastened intellect, found a voice. Maltravers was not slow to discover that beneath her simplicity there lurked sense, judgment, and imagination. Insensibly his own conversation took a higher flight. With the freedom which his mature years and reputation gave him, he mingled eloquent instruction with lighter and more trifling subjects; he directed her earnest and docile mind, not only to new fields of written knowledge, but to many of the secrets of Nature, subtle or sublime. He had a wide range of scientific as well as literary lore; the stars, the flowers, the phenomena of the physical world, afforded themes on which he descanted with the fervent love of a poet and the easy knowledge of a sage.

Mr. Merton, observing that little or nothing of sentiment mingled with their familiar intercourse, felt perfectly at ease; and knowing that Maltravers had been intimate with Lumley, he naturally concluded that he was aware of the engagement between Evelyn and his friend. Meanwhile Maltravers appeared unconscious that such a being as Lord Vargrave existed.

It is not to be wondered at that the daily presence, the delicate flattery of attention from a man like Maltravers, should strongly impress the imagination, if not the heart, of a susceptible girl. Already prepossessed in his favour, and wholly unaccustomed to a society which combined so many attractions, Evelyn regarded him with unspeakable veneration; to the darker shades in his character she was blind, — to her, indeed, they did not appear. True that once or twice in mixed society his disdainful and imperious temper broke hastily and harshly forth. To folly, to pretension, to presumption, he showed but slight forbearance. The impatient smile, the biting sarcasm, the cold repulse, that might gall, yet could scarce be openly resented, betrayed that he was one who affected to free himself from the polished restraints of social intercourse. He had once been too scrupulous in not wounding vanity; he was now too indifferent to it. But if sometimes this unamiable trait of character, as displayed to others, chilled or startled Evelyn, the contrast of his manner towards herself was a flattery too delicious not to efface all other recollections. To her ear his voice always softened its tone; to her capacity of mind ever bent as by sympathy, not condescension; to her — the young, the timid, the half-informed — to her alone he did not disdain to exhibit all the stores of his knowledge, all the best and brightest colours of his mind. She modestly wondered at so strange a preference. Perhaps a sudden and blunt compliment which Maltravers once addressed to her may explain it. One day, when she had conversed more freely and more fully than usual, he broke in upon her with this abrupt exclamation, —

“Miss Cameron, you must have associated from your childhood with beautiful minds. I see already that from the world, vile as it is, you have nothing of contagion to fear. I have heard you talk on the most various matters, on many of which your knowledge is imperfect; but you have never uttered one mean idea, or one false sentiment. Truth seems intuitive to you.”

It was indeed this singular purity of heart which made to the world-wearied man the chief charm in Evelyn Cameron.

From this purity came, as from the heart of a poet, a thousand new and heaven-taught thoughts which had in them a wisdom of their own, — thoughts that often brought the stern listener back to youth, and reconciled him with life. The wise Maltravers learned more from Evelyn than Evelyn did from Maltravers.

There was, however, another trait — deeper than that of temper — in Maltravers, and which was, unlike the latter, more manifest to her than to others, — his contempt for all the things her young and fresh enthusiasm had been taught to prize, the fame that endeared and hallowed him to her eyes, the excitement of ambition, and its rewards. He spoke with such bitter disdain of great names and great deeds. “Children of a larger growth they were,” said he, one day, in answer to her defence of the luminaries of their kind, “allured by baubles as poor as the rattle and the doll’s house. How many have been made great, as the word is, by their vices! Paltry craft won command to Themistocles; to escape his duns, the profligate Cæsar heads an army, and achieves his laurels; Brutus, the aristocrat, stabs his patron, that patri-cians might again trample on plebeians, and that posterity might talk of *him*. The love of posthumous fame — what is it but as puerile a passion for notoriety as that which made a Frenchman I once knew lay out two thousand pounds in sugar-plums? To be talked of — how poor a desire! Does it matter whether it be by the gossips of this age or the next? Some men are urged on to fame by poverty — that is an excuse for their trouble; but there is no more nobleness in the motive than in that which makes yon poor ploughman sweat in the eye of Phœbus. In fact, the larger part of eminent men, instead of being inspired by any lofty desire to benefit their species or enrich the human mind, have acted or composed, without any definite object beyond the satisfying a restless appetite for excitement, or indulging the dreams of a selfish glory. And when nobler aspirations have fired them, it has too often been but to wild fanaticism and sanguinary crime. What dupes of glory ever were animated by a deeper faith, a higher ambition, than the frantic followers of

Mahomet, — taught to believe that it was virtue to ravage the earth, and that they sprang from the battle-field into Paradise? Religion and liberty, love of country, what splendid motives to action! Lo, the results, when the motives are keen, the action once commenced! Behold the Inquisition, the Days of Terror, the Council of Ten, and the Dungeons of Venice!”

Evelyn was scarcely fit to wrestle with these melancholy fallacies; but her instinct of truth suggested an answer.

“What would society be if all men thought as you do, and acted up to the theory? No literature, no art, no glory, no patriotism, no virtue, no civilization! You analyze men’s motives — how can you be sure you judge rightly? Look to the results, — our benefit, our enlightenment! If the results be great, Ambition is a virtue, no matter what motive awakened it. Is it not so?”

Evelyn spoke blushing and timidly. Maltravers, despite his own tenets, was delighted with her reply.

“You reason well,” said he, with a smile. “But how are we sure that the results are such as you depict them? Civilization, enlightenment, — they are vague terms, hollow sounds. Never fear that the world will reason as I do. Action will never be stagnant while there are such things as gold and power. The vessel will move on — let the galley-slaves have it to themselves. What I have seen of life convinces me that progress is not always improvement. Civilization has evils unknown to the savage state; and *vice versa*. Men in all states seem to have much the same proportion of happiness. We judge others with eyes accustomed to dwell on our own circumstances. I have seen the slave, whom we commiserate, enjoy his holiday with a rapture unknown to the grave freeman. I have seen that slave made free, and enriched by the benevolence of his master; and he has been gay no more. The masses of men in all countries are much the same. If there are greater comforts in the hardy North, Providence bestows a fertile earth and a glorious heaven, and a mind susceptible to enjoyment as flowers to light, on the voluptuous indulgence of the Italian, or the contented apathy of the

Hindoo. In the mighty organization of good and evil, what can we vain individuals effect? They who labour most, how doubtful is their reputation! Who shall say whether Voltaire or Napoleon, Cromwell or Cæsar, Walpole or Pitt, has done most good or most evil? It is a question casuists may dispute on. Some of us think that poets have been the delight and the lights of men; another school of philosophy has treated them as the corrupters of the species, — panderers to the false glory of war, to the effeminacies of taste, to the pampering of the passions above the reason. Nay, even those who have effected inventions that change the face of the earth — the printing-press, gunpowder, the steam-engine, — men hailed as benefactors by the unthinking herd, or the would-be sages, — have introduced ills unknown before, adulterating and often counterbalancing the good. Each new improvement in machinery deprives hundreds of food. Civilization is the eternal sacrifice of one generation to the next. An awful sense of the impotence of human agencies has crushed down the sublime aspirations for mankind which I once indulged. For myself, I float on the great waters, without pilot or rudder, and trust passively to the winds, that are the breath of God."

This conversation left a deep impression upon Evelyn; it inspired her with a new interest in one in whom so many noble qualities lay dulled and torpid, by the indulgence of a self-sophistry, which, girl as she was, she felt wholly unworthy of his powers. And it was this error in Maltravers that, levelling his superiority, brought him nearer to her heart. Ah, if she could restore him to his race! It was a dangerous desire, but it intoxicated and absorbed her.

Oh, how sweetly were those fair evenings spent, — the evenings of happy June! And then, as Maltravers suffered the children to tease him into talk about the wonders he had seen in the regions far away, how did the soft and social hues of his character unfold themselves! There is in all real genius so much latent playfulness of nature it almost seems as if genius never could grow old. The inscriptions that youth writes upon the tablets of an imaginative mind are, indeed, never wholly obliterated, — they are as an invisible writing.

which gradually becomes clear in the light and warmth. Bring genius familiarly with the young, and it is as young as they are. Evelyn did not yet, therefore, observe the disparity of *years* between herself and Maltravers. But the disparity of knowledge and power served for the present to interdict to her that sweet feeling of equality in commune, without which love is rarely a very intense affection in women. It is not so with men. But by degrees she grew more and more familiar with her stern friend; and in that familiarity there was perilous fascination to Maltravers. She could laugh him at any moment out of his most moody reveries; contradict with a pretty wilfulness his most favourite dogmas; nay, even scold him, with bewitching gravity, if he was not always at the command of her wishes — or caprice. At this time it seemed certain that Maltravers would fall in love with Evelyn; but it rested on more doubtful probabilities whether Evelyn would fall in love with him.

CHAPTER VII.

CONTRAHE vela,

Et te littoribus cymba propinqua vehat.¹ — SENECA.

“HAS not Miss Cameron a beautiful countenance?” said Mr. Merton to Maltravers, as Evelyn, unconscious of the compliment, sat at a little distance, bending down her eyes to Sophy, who was weaving daisy-chains on a stool at her knee, and whom she was telling not to talk loud, — for Merton had been giving Maltravers some useful information respecting the management of his estate; and Evelyn was already interested in all that could interest her friend. She had one excellent thing in woman, had Evelyn Cameron: despite her sunny cheerfulness of temper she was *quiet*; and she had

¹ “Furl your sails, and let the next boat carry you to the shore.”

insensibly acquired, under the roof of her musing and silent mother, the habit of never disturbing others. What a blessed secret is that in the intercourse of domestic life!

"Has not Miss Cameron a beautiful countenance?"

Maltravers started at the question, — it was a literal translation of his own thought at that moment. He checked the enthusiasm that rose to his lip, and calmly re-echoed the word, —

"Beautiful indeed!"

"And so sweet-tempered and unaffected; she has been admirably brought up. I believe Lady Vargrave is a most exemplary woman. Miss Cameron will, indeed, be a treasure to her betrothed husband. He is to be envied."

"Her betrothed husband!" said Maltravers, turning very pale.

"Yes; Lord Vargrave. Did you not know that she was engaged to him from her childhood? It was the wish, nay, command, of the late lord, who bequeathed her his vast fortune, if not on that condition, at least on that understanding. Did you never hear of this before?"

While Mr. Merton spoke, a sudden recollection returned to Maltravers. He *had* heard Lumley himself refer to the engagement, but it had been in the sick chamber of Florence, — little heeded at the time, and swept from his mind by a thousand after-thoughts and scenes. Mr. Merton continued, —

"We expect Lord Vargrave down soon. He is an ardent lover, I conclude; but public life chains him so much to London. He made an admirable speech in the Lords last night; at least, our party appear to think so. They are to be married when Miss Cameron attains the age of eighteen."

Accustomed to endurance, and skilled in the proud art of concealing emotion, Maltravers betrayed to the eye of Mr. Merton no symptom of surprise or dismay at this intelligence. If the rector had conceived any previous suspicion that Maltravers was touched beyond mere admiration for beauty, the suspicion would have vanished as he heard his guest coldly reply, —

"I trust Lord Vargrave may deserve his happiness. But, to return to Mr. Justis; you corroborate my own opinion of that smooth-spoken gentleman."

The conversation flowed back to business. At last, Maltravers rose to depart.

"Will you not dine with us to-day?" said the hospitable rector.

"Many thanks, — no; I have much business to attend to at home for some days to come."

"Kiss Sophy, Mr. Ernest, — Sophy very good girl to-day. Let the pretty butterfly go, because Evy said it was cruel to put it in a card-box; kiss Sophy."

Maltravers took the child (whose heart he had completely won) in his arms, and kissed her tenderly; then advancing to Evelyn, he held out his hand, while his eyes were fixed upon her with an expression of deep and mournful interest, which she could not understand.

"God bless you, Miss Cameron," he said, and his lip quivered.

Days passed, and they saw no more of Maltravers. He excused himself on pretence, now of business, now of other engagements, from all the invitations of the rector. Mr. Merton unsuspectingly accepted the excuse; for he knew that Maltravers was necessarily much occupied.

His arrival had now spread throughout the country; and such of his equals as were still in B——shire hastened to offer congratulations, and press hospitality. Perhaps it was the desire to make his excuses to Merton valid which prompted the master of Burleigh to yield to the other invitations that crowded on him. But this was not all, — Maltravers acquired in the neighbourhood the reputation of a man of business. Mr. Justis was abruptly dismissed; with the help of the bailiff Maltravers became his own steward. His parting address to this personage was characteristic of the mingled harshness and justice of Maltravers.

"Sir," said he, as they closed their accounts, "I discharge you because you are a rascal, — there can be no dispute about that; you have plundered your owner, yet you have ground

his tenants, and neglected the poor. My villages are filled with paupers, my rent-roll is reduced a fourth; and yet, while some of my tenants appear to pay nominal rents (why, you best know), others are screwed up higher than any man's in the country. You are a rogue, Mr. Justis, — your own account-books show it; and if I send them to a lawyer, you would have to refund a sum that I could apply very advantageously to the rectification of your blunders."

"I hope, sir," said the steward, conscience-stricken and appalled, — "I hope you will not ruin me; indeed, indeed, if I was called upon to refund, I should go to jail."

"Make yourself easy, sir. It is just that I should suffer as well as you. My neglect of my own duties tempted you to roguery. You were honest under the vigilant eye of Mr. Cleveland. Retire with your gains: if you are quite hardened, no punishment can touch you; if you are not, it is punishment enough to stand there gray-headed, with one foot in the grave, and hear yourself called a rogue, and know that you cannot defend yourself, — go!"

Maltravers next occupied himself in all the affairs that a mismanaged estate brought upon him. He got rid of some tenants, he made new arrangements with others; he called labour into requisition by a variety of improvements; he paid minute attention to the poor, not in the weakness of careless and indiscriminate charity, by which popularity is so cheaply purchased, and independence so easily degraded, — no, his main care was to stimulate industry and raise hope. The ambition and emulation that he so vainly denied in himself, he found his most useful levers in the humble labourers whose characters he had studied, whose condition he sought to make themselves desire to elevate. Unconsciously his whole practice began to refute his theories. The abuses of the old Poor-Laws were rife in his neighbourhood; his quick penetration, and perhaps his imperious habits of decision, suggested to him many of the best provisions of the law now called into operation; but he was too wise to be the Philosopher Square of a system. He did not attempt too much; and he recognized one principle, which, as yet, the administrators of the

new Poor-Laws have not sufficiently discovered. One main object of the new code was, by curbing public charity, to task the activity of individual benevolence. If the proprietor or the clergyman find under his own eye isolated instances of severity, oppression, or hardship in a general and salutary law, instead of railing against the law, he ought to attend to the individual instances; and private benevolence ought to keep the balance of the scales even, and be the makeweight wherever there is a just deficiency of national charity.¹ It was this which, in the modified and discreet regulations that he sought to establish on his estates, Maltravers especially and pointedly attended to. Age, infirmity, temporary distress, unmerited destitution, found him a steady, watchful, indefatigable friend. In these labours, commenced with extraordinary promptitude, and the energy of a single purpose and stern mind, Maltravers was necessarily brought into contact with the neighbouring magistrates and gentry. He was combating evils and advancing objects in which all were interested; and his vigorous sense, and his past parliamentary reputation, joined with the respect which in provinces always attaches to ancient birth, won unexpected and general favour to his views. At the rectory they heard of him constantly, not only through occasional visitors, but through Mr. Merton, who was ever thrown in his way; but he continued to keep himself aloof from the house. Every one (Mr. Merton excepted) missed him, — even Caroline, whose able though worldly mind could appreciate his conversation; the children mourned for their playmate, who was so much more affable than their own stiff-neckclothed brothers; and Evelyn was at least more serious and thoughtful than she had ever been before, and the talk of others seemed to her wearisome, trite, and dull.

Was Maltravers happy in his new pursuits? His state of

¹ The object of parochial reform is not that of economy alone; not merely to reduce poor-rates. The ratepayer ought to remember that the more he wrests from the gripe of the sturdy mendicant, the more he ought to bestow on undeserved distress. Without the mitigations of private virtue, every law that benevolists could make would be harsh.

mind at that time it is not easy to read. His masculine spirit and haughty temper were wrestling hard against a feeling that had been fast ripening into passion; but at night, in his solitary and cheerless home, a vision, too exquisite to indulge, would force itself upon him, till he started from the reverie, and said to his rebellious heart: "A few more years, and thou wilt be still. What in this brief life is a pang more or less? Better to have nothing to care for, so wilt thou defraud Fate, thy deceitful foe! Be contented that thou art alone!"

Fortunate was it, then, for Maltravers, that he was in his native land, not in climes where excitement is in the pursuit of pleasure rather than in the exercise of duties. In the hardy air of the liberal England, he was already, though unknown to himself, bracing and ennobling his dispositions and desires. It is the boast of this island that the slave whose foot touches the soil is free. The boast may be enlarged. Where so much is left to the people, where the life of civilization, not locked up in the tyranny of Central Despotism, spreads, vivifying, restless, ardent, through every vein of the healthful body, the most distant province, the obscurest village, has claims on our exertions, our duties, and forces us into energy and citizenship. The spirit of liberty, that strikes the chain from the slave, binds the freeman to his brother. This is the Religion of Freedom. And hence it is that the stormy struggles of free States have been blessed with results of Virtue, of Wisdom, and of Genius by Him who bade us love one another, — not only that love in itself is excellent, but that from love, which in its widest sense is but the spiritual term for liberty, whatever is worthiest of our solemn nature has its birth.

BOOK III.

Τραχέα λειάγει, πάθει κόρον.

Ex. SOLON: Eleg.

“Harsh things he mitigates, and pride subdues.”

CHAPTER I.

You still are what you were, sir!

. . . With most quick agility could turn
And return; make knots and undo them,
Give forked counsel. — *Volpone, or the Fox.*

BEFORE a large table, covered with parliamentary papers, sat Lumley Lord Vargrave. His complexion, though still healthy, had faded from the freshness of hue which distinguished him in youth. His features, always sharp, had grown yet more angular: his brows seemed to project more broodingly over his eyes, which, though of undiminished brightness, were sunk deep in their sockets, and had lost much of their quick restlessness. The character of his mind had begun to stamp itself on the physiognomy, especially on the mouth when in repose. It was a face striking for acute intelligence, for concentrated energy; but there was a something written in it which said, “BEWARE!” It would have inspired any one who had mixed much amongst men with a vague suspicion and distrust.

Lumley had been always careful, though plain, in dress; but there was now a more evident attention bestowed on his person than he had ever manifested in youth, — while there was something of the Roman’s celebrated foppery in the skill

with which his hair was arranged on his high forehead, so as either to conceal or relieve a partial baldness at the temples. Perhaps, too, from the possession of high station, or the habit of living only amongst the great, there was a certain dignity insensibly diffused over his whole person that was not noticeable in his earlier years, when a certain *ton de garnison* was blended with his ease of manners. Yet, even now, dignity was not his prevalent characteristic; and in ordinary occasions, or mixed society, he still found a familiar frankness a more useful species of simulation. At the time we now treat of, Lord Vargrave was leaning his cheek on one hand, while the other rested idly on the papers methodically arranged before him. He appeared to have suspended his labours, and to be occupied in thought. It was, in truth, a critical period in the career of Lord Vargrave.

From the date of his accession to the peerage, the rise of Lumley Ferrers had been less rapid and progressive than he himself could have foreseen. At first, all was sunshine before him; he had contrived to make himself useful to his party; he had also made himself personally popular. To the ease and cordiality of his happy address, he added the seemingly careless candour so often mistaken for honesty; while, as there was nothing showy or brilliant in his abilities or oratory — nothing that aspired far above the pretensions of others, and aroused envy by mortifying self-love — he created but little jealousy even amongst the rivals before whom he obtained precedence. For some time, therefore, he went smoothly on, continuing to rise in the estimation of his party, and commanding a certain respect from the neutral public, by acknowledged and eminent talents in the details of business; for his quickness of penetration, and a logical habit of mind, enabled him to grapple with and generalize the minutiae of official labour or of legislative enactments with a masterly success. But as the road became clearer to his steps, his ambition became more evident and daring. Naturally dictatorial and presumptuous, his early suppleness to superiors was now exchanged for a self-willed pertinacity, which often displeased the more haughty leaders of his party, and often

wounded the more vain. His pretensions were scanned with eyes more jealous and less tolerant than at first. Proud aristocrats began to recollect that a mushroom peerage was supported but by a scanty fortune; the men of more dazzling genius began to sneer at the red-tape minister as a mere official manager of details; he lost much of the personal popularity which had been one secret of his power. But what principally injured him in the eyes of his party and the public were certain ambiguous and obscure circumstances connected with a short period when himself and his associates were thrown out of office. At this time, it was noticeable that the journals of the Government that succeeded were peculiarly polite to Lord Vargrave, while they covered all his coadjutors with obloquy: and it was more than suspected that secret negotiations between himself and the new ministry were going on, when suddenly the latter broke up, and Lord Vargrave's proper party were reinstated. The vague suspicions that attached to Vargrave were somewhat strengthened in the opinion of the public by the fact that he was at first left out of the restored administration; and when subsequently, after a speech which showed that he could be mischievous if not propitiated, he was readmitted, it was precisely to the same office he had held before, — an office which did not admit him into the Cabinet. Lumley, burning with resentment, longed to decline the offer; but, alas! he was poor, and, what was worse, in debt; "his poverty, but not his will, consented." He was reinstated; but though prodigiously improved as a debater, he felt that he had not advanced as a public man. His ambition inflamed by his discontent, he had, since his return to office, strained every nerve to strengthen his position. He met the sarcasms on his poverty by greatly increasing his expenditure, and by advertising everywhere his engagement to an heiress whose fortune, great as it was, he easily contrived to magnify. As his old house in Great George Street — well fitted for the bustling commoner — was no longer suited to the official and fashionable peer, he had, on his accession to the title, exchanged that respectable residence for a large mansion in

Hamilton Place; and his sober dinners were succeeded by splendid banquets. Naturally, he had no taste for such things; his mind was too nervous, and his temper too hard, to take pleasure in luxury or ostentation. But now, as ever he *acted upon a system*. Living in a country governed by the mightiest and wealthiest aristocracy in the world, which, from the first class almost to the lowest, ostentation pervades, — the very backbone and marrow of society, — he felt that to fall far short of his rivals in display was to give them an advantage which he could not compensate either by the power of his connections or the surpassing loftiness of his character and genius. Playing for a great game, and with his eyes open to all the consequences, he cared not for involving his private fortunes in a lottery in which a great prize might be drawn. To do Vargrave justice, money with him had never been an object, but a means; he was grasping, but not avaricious. If men much richer than Lord Vargrave find State distinctions very expensive, and often ruinous, it is not to be supposed that his salary, joined to so moderate a private fortune, could support the style in which he lived. His income was already deeply mortgaged, and debt accumulated upon debt. Nor had this man, so eminent for the management of public business, any of that talent which springs from *justice*, and makes its possessor a skilful manager of his own affairs. Perpetually absorbed in intrigues and schemes, he was too much engaged in cheating others on a large scale to have time to prevent being himself cheated on a small one. He never looked into bills till he was compelled to pay them; and he never calculated the amount of an expense that seemed the least necessary to his purposes. But still Lord Vargrave relied upon his marriage with the wealthy Evelyn to relieve him from all his embarrassments; and if a doubt of the realization of that vision ever occurred to him, still public life had splendid prizes. Nay, should he fail with Miss Cameron, he even thought that, by good management, he might ultimately make it worth while to his colleagues to purchase his absence with the gorgeous bribe of the Governor-Generalship of India.

As oratory is an art in which practice and the dignity of station produce marvellous improvement, so Lumley had of late made effects in the House of Lords of which he had once been judged incapable. It is true that no practice and no station can give men qualities in which they are wholly deficient; but these advantages can bring out in the best light all the qualities they *do* possess. The glow of a generous imagination, the grasp of a profound statesmanship, the enthusiasm of a noble nature,—these no practice could educe from the eloquence of Lumley Lord Vargrave, for he had them not; but bold wit, fluent and vigorous sentences, effective arrangement of parliamentary logic, readiness of retort, plausibility of manner, aided by a delivery peculiar for self-possession and ease, a clear and ringing voice (to the only fault of which, shrillness without passion, the ear of the audience had grown accustomed), and a countenance impressive from its courageous intelligence, — all these had raised the promising speaker into the matured excellence of a nervous and formidable debater. But precisely as he rose in the display of his talents, did he awaken envies and enmities hitherto dormant. And it must be added that, with all his craft and coldness, Lord Vargrave was often a very dangerous and mischievous speaker for the interests of his party. His colleagues had often cause to tremble when he rose: nay, even when the cheers of his own faction shook the old tapestried walls. A man who has no sympathy with the public must commit many and fatal indiscretions when the public, as well as his audience, is to be his judge. Lord Vargrave's utter incapacity to comprehend political morality, his contempt for all the objects of social benevolence, frequently led him into the avowal of doctrines, which, if they did not startle the men of the world whom he addressed (smoothed away, as such doctrines were, by speciousness of manner and delivery), created deep disgust in those even of his own politics who read their naked exposition in the daily papers. Never did Lord Vargrave utter one of those generous sentiments which, no matter whether propounded by Radical or Tory, sink deep into the heart of the people, and do lasting service to the cause they adorn. But no man defended an abuse, however glaring, with a more vigor-

ous championship, or hurled defiance upon a popular demand with a more courageous scorn. In some times, when the anti-popular principle is strong, such a leader may be useful; but at the moment of which we treat he was a most equivocal auxiliary. A considerable proportion of the ministers, headed by the premier himself, a man of wise views and unimpeachable honour, had learned to view Lord Vargrave with dislike and distrust. They might have sought to get rid of him; but he was not one whom slight mortifications could induce to retire of his own accord, nor was the sarcastic and bold debater a person whose resentment and opposition could be despised. Lord Vargrave, moreover, had secured a party of his own, — a party more formidable than himself. He went largely into society; he was the special favourite of the female diplomats, whose voices at that time were powerful suffrages, and with whom, by a thousand links of gallantry and intrigue, the agreeable and courteous minister formed a close alliance. All that *salons* could do for him was done. Added to this, he was personally liked by his royal master; and the Court gave him their golden opinions; while the poorer, the corrupter, and the more bigoted portion of the ministry regarded him with avowed admiration.

In the House of Commons, too, and in the bureaucracy, he had no inconsiderable strength; for Lumley never contracted the habits of personal abruptness and discourtesy common to men in power who wish to keep applicants aloof. He was bland and conciliating to all men of ranks; his intellect and self-complacency raised him far above the petty jealousies that great men feel for rising men. Did any tyro earn the smallest distinction in parliament, no man sought his acquaintance so eagerly as Lord Vargrave; no man complimented, encouraged, "brought on" the new aspirants of his party with so hearty a good will.

Such a minister could not fail of having devoted followers among the able, the ambitious, and the vain. It must also be confessed that Lord Vargrave neglected no baser and less justifiable means to cement his power by placing it on the sure rock of self-interest. No jobbing was too gross for him. He was shamefully corrupt in the disposition of his patronage;

and no rebuffs, no taunts from his official brethren, could restrain him from urging the claims of any of his creatures upon the public purse. His followers regarded this charitable selfishness as the stanchness and zeal of friendship; and the ambition of hundreds was wound up in the ambition of the unprincipled minister.

But besides the notoriety of his public corruption, Lord Vargrave was secretly suspected by some of personal dishonesty, — suspected of selling his State information to stock-jobbers, of having pecuniary interests in some of the claims he urged with so obstinate a pertinacity. And though there was not the smallest evidence of such utter abandonment of honour, though it was probably but a calumnious whisper, yet the mere suspicion of such practices served to sharpen the aversion of his enemies, and justify the disgust of his rivals.

In this position now stood Lord Vargrave: supported by interested, but able and powerful partisans; hated in the country, feared by some of those with whom he served, despised by others, looked up to by the rest. It was a situation that less daunted than delighted him; for it seemed to render necessary and excuse the habits of scheming and manœuvre which were so genial to his crafty and plotting temper. Like an ancient Greek, his spirit loved intrigue for intrigue's sake. Had it led to no end, it would still have been sweet to him as a means. He rejoiced to surround himself with the most complicated webs and meshes; to sit in the centre of a million plots. He cared not how rash and wild some of them were. He relied on his own ingenuity, promptitude, and habitual good fortune to make every spring he handled conducive to the purpose of the machine — SELF.

His last visit to Lady Vargrave, and his conversation with Evelyn, had left on his mind much dissatisfaction and fear. In the earlier years of his intercourse with Evelyn, his good humour, gallantry, and presents had not failed to attach the child to the agreeable and liberal visitor she had been taught to regard as a relation. It was only as she grew up to womanhood and learned to comprehend the nature of the tie between them, that she shrank from his familiarity; and then only had

he learned to doubt of the fulfilment of his uncle's wish. The last visit had increased this doubt to a painful apprehension. He saw that he was not loved; he saw that it required great address, and the absence of happier rivals, to secure to him the hand of Evelyn; and he cursed the duties and the schemes which necessarily kept him from her side. He had thought of persuading Lady Vargrave to let her come to London, where he could be ever at hand; and as the season was now set in, his representations on this head would appear sensible and just. But then again this was to incur greater dangers than those he would avoid. London! — a beauty and an heiress, in her first *début* in London! What formidable admirers would flock around her! Vargrave shuddered to think of the gay, handsome, well-dressed, seductive young *élégans*, who might seem, to a girl of seventeen, suitors far more fascinating than the middle-aged politician. This was perilous; nor was this all: Lord Vargrave knew that in London — gaudy, babbling, and remorseless London — all that he could most wish to conceal from the young lady would be dragged to day. He had been the lover, not of one, but of a dozen women, for whom he did not care three straws, but whose favour had served to strengthen him in society, or whose influence made up for his own want of hereditary political connections. The manner in which he contrived to shake off these various Ariadnes, whenever it was advisable, was not the least striking proof of his diplomatic abilities. He never left them enemies. According to his own solution of the mystery, he took care never to play the gallant with Dulcineas under a certain age. "Middle-aged women," he was wont to say, "are very little different from middle-aged men; they see things sensibly, and take things coolly." Now Evelyn could not be three weeks, perhaps three days, in London, without learning of one or the other of these *liaisons*. What an excuse, if she sought one, to break with him! Altogether, Lord Vargrave was sorely perplexed, but not despondent. Evelyn's fortune was more than ever necessary to him, and Evelyn he was resolved to obtain since to that fortune she was an indispensable appendage.

CHAPTER II.

YOU shall be Horace, and Tibullus I. — POPE.

LORD VARGRAVE was disturbed from his revery by the entrance of the Earl of Saxingham.

"You are welcome!" said Lumley, "welcome! — the very man I wished to see."

Lord Saxingham, who was scarcely altered since we met with him in the last series of this work, except that he had grown somewhat paler and thinner, and that his hair had changed from iron-gray to snow-white, threw himself in the armchair beside Lumley, and replied, —

"Vargrave, it is really unpleasant, our finding ourselves always thus controlled by our own partisans. I do not understand this new-fangled policy, this squaring of measures to please the Opposition, and throwing sops to that many-headed monster called Public Opinion. I am sure it will end most mischievously."

"I am satisfied of it," returned Lord Vargrave. "All vigour and union seem to have left us; and if they carry the — question against us, I know not what is to be done."

"For my part, I shall resign," said Lord Saxingham, doggedly; "it is the only alternative left to men of honour."

"You are wrong; I know another alternative."

"What is that?"

"Make a Cabinet of our own. Look ye, my dear lord; you have been ill-used; your high character, your long experience, are treated with contempt. It is an affront to you — the situation you hold. You, Privy Seal! — you ought to be Premier; ay, and, if you are ruled by me, Premier you shall be yet."

Lord Saxingham coloured, and breathed hard.

"You have often hinted at this before, Lumley; but you are so partial, so friendly."

"Not at all. You saw the leading article in the — to-day? That will be followed up by two evening papers within five hours of this time. We have strength with the Press, with the Commons, with the Court, — only let us hold fast together. This — question, by which they hope to get rid of us, shall destroy them. You shall be Prime Minister before the year is over — by Heaven, you shall! — and then, I suppose, *I* too may be admitted to the Cabinet!"

"But how? — how, Lumley? You are too rash, too daring."

"It has not been my fault hitherto, — but boldness is caution in our circumstances. If they throw us out now, I see the inevitable march of events, — we shall be out for years, perhaps for life. The Cabinet will recede more and more from our principles, our party. Now is the time for a determined stand; now can we make or mar ourselves. I will not resign; the king is with us; our strength shall be known. These haughty imbeciles shall fall into the trap they have dug for us."

Lumley spoke warmly, and with the confidence of a mind firmly assured of success. Lord Saxingham was moved; bright visions flashed across him, — the premiership, a dukedom. Yet he was old and childless, and his honours would die with the last lord of Saxingham!

"See," continued Lumley, "I have calculated our resources as accurately as an electioneering agent would cast up the list of voters. In the Press, I have secured — and —, and in the Commons we have the subtle —, and the vigour of —, and the popular name of —, and all the boroughs of —; in the Cabinet we have —, and at Court you know our strength. Let us choose our moment; a sudden *coup*, an interview with the king, statement of our conscientious scruples to this atrocious measure. I know the vain, stiff mind of the premier; *he* will lose temper, he will tender his resignation; to his astonishment, it will be accepted. You will be sent for; we will dissolve parliament; we will strain every nerve in the elections; we shall succeed, I know we shall. But be silent in the meanwhile, be cautious: let not a word

escape you, let them think us beaten; lull suspicion asleep; let us lament our weakness, and hint, only hint at our resignation, but with assurances of continued support. I know how to blind them, if you leave it to me."

The weak mind of the old earl was as a puppet in the hands of his bold kinsman. He feared one moment, hoped another; now his ambition was flattered, now his sense of honour was alarmed. There was something in Lumley's intrigue to oust the government with which he served that had an appearance of cunning and baseness, of which Lord Saxingham, whose personal character was high, by no means approved. But Vargrave talked him over with consummate address, and when they parted, the earl carried his head two inches higher, — he was preparing himself for his rise in life.

"That is well! that is well!" said Lumley, rubbing his hands when he was left alone: "the old driveller will be my *locum tenens*, till years and renown enable me to become his successor. Meanwhile, I shall be really what he will be in name."

Here Lord Vargrave's well-fed servant, now advanced to the dignity of own gentleman and house-steward, entered the room with a letter; it had a portentous look; it was wafered, the paper was blue, the hand clerklike, there was no envelope; it bore its infernal origin on the face of it, — IT WAS A DUN'S.

Lumley opened the epistle with an impatient pshaw! The man, a silversmith (Lumley's plate was much admired!) had applied for years in vain; the amount was large, and execution was threatened! An execution! — it is a trifle to a rich man; but no trifle to one suspected of being poor, one straining at that very moment at so high an object, one to whom public opinion was so necessary, one who knew that nothing but his title, and scarcely that, saved him from the reputation of an adventurer! He must again have recourse to the money-lenders, — his small estate was long since too deeply mortgaged to afford new security. Usury, usury, again! — he knew its price, and he sighed — but what was to be done?

"It is but for a few months, a few months, and Evelyn must be mine. Saxingham has already lent me what he can;

but he is embarrassed. This d—d office, what a tax it is! and the rascals say we are too well paid! I, too, who could live happy in a garret, if this purse-proud England would but allow one to exist within one's income. My fellow-trustee, the banker, my uncle's old correspondent—ah, well thought of! He knows the conditions of the will; he knows that, at the worst, I must have thirty thousand pounds, if I live a few months longer. I will go to him."

CHAPTER III.

*ANIMUM nunc hoc celerem, nunc dividit illuc.*¹ — VIRGIL.

THE late Mr. Templeton had been a banker in a provincial town, which was the centre of great commercial and agricultural activity and enterprise. He had made the bulk of his fortune in the happy days of paper currency and war. Besides his country bank he had a considerable share in a metropolitan one of some eminence. At the time of his marriage with the present Lady Vargrave he retired altogether from business, and never returned to the place in which his wealth had been amassed. He had still kept up a familiar acquaintance with the principal and senior partner of the metropolitan bank I have referred to; for he was a man who always loved to talk about money matters with those who understood them. This gentleman, Mr. Gustavus Douce, had been named, with Lumley, joint trustee to Evelyn's fortune. They had full powers to invest it in whatever stock seemed most safe or advantageous. The trustees appeared well chosen, as one, being destined to share the fortune, would have the deepest interest in its security; and the other, from his habits and profession, would be a most excellent adviser.

Of Mr. Douce, Lord Vargrave had seen but little; they

¹ "Now this, now that, distracts the active mind."

were not thrown together. But Lord Vargrave, who thought every rich man might, some time or other, become a desirable acquaintance, regularly asked him once every year to dinner; and twice in return he had dined with Mr. Douce, in one of the most splendid villas, and off some of the most splendid plate it had ever been his fortune to witness and to envy!—so that the little favour he was about to ask was but a slight return for Lord Vargrave's condescension.

He found the banker in his private sanctum, his carriage at the door; for it was just four o'clock, an hour in which Mr. Douce regularly departed to Caserta, as his aforesaid villa was somewhat affectedly styled.

Mr. Douce was a small man, a nervous man; he did not seem quite master of his own limbs: when he bowed he seemed to be making you a present of his legs; when he sat down, he twitched first on one side, then on the other, thrust his hands into his pockets, then took them out, and looked at them, as if in astonishment, then seized upon a pen, by which they were luckily provided with incessant occupation. Meanwhile, there was what might fairly be called a constant play of countenance: first he smiled, then looked grave; now raised his eyebrows, till they rose like rainbows, to the horizon of his pale, straw-coloured hair; and next darted them down, like an avalanche, over the twinkling, restless, fluttering, little blue eyes, which then became almost invisible. Mr. Douce had, in fact, all the appearance of a painfully shy man, which was the more strange, as he had the reputation of enterprise, and even audacity, in the business of his profession, and was fond of the society of the great.

"I have called on you, my dear sir," said Lord Vargrave, after the preliminary salutations, "to ask a little favour, which, if the least inconvenient, have no hesitation in refusing. You know how I am situated with regard to my ward, Miss Cameron; in a few months I hope she will be Lady Vargrave."

Mr. Douce showed three small teeth, which were all that, in the front of his mouth, fate had left him; and then, as if alarmed at the indelicacy of a smile upon such a subject,

pushed back his chair, and twitched up his blotting-paper-coloured trousers.

"Yes, in a few months I hope she will be Lady Vargrave; and you know then, Mr. Douce, that I shall be in no want of money."

"I hope — that is to say, I am sure, — that — I trust that never will be the ca-ca-case with your lordship," put in Mr. Douce, with timid hesitation. Mr. Douce, in addition to his other good qualities, stammered much in the delivery of his sentences.

"You are very kind, but it is the case just at present; I have great need of a few thousand pounds upon my personal security. My estate is already a little mortgaged, and I don't wish to encumber it more; besides, the loan would be merely temporary. You know that if at the age of eighteen Miss Cameron refuses me (a supposition out of the question, but in business we must calculate on improbabilities), I claim the forfeit she incurs, — thirty thousand pounds; you remember."

"Oh, yes — that — is — upon my word — I — I don't exactly — but — your lord — l-l-l-lord-lordship knows best — I have been so — so busy — I forget the exact — hem — hem!"

"If you just turn to the will you will see it is as I say. Now, could you conveniently place a few thousands to my account, just for a short time? But I see you don't like it. Never mind, I can get it elsewhere; only, as you were my poor uncle's friend —"

"Your lord — l-l-l-lordship is quite mistaken," said Mr. Douce, with trembling agitation; "upon my word, yes, a few thou-thou-thousands — to be sure — to be sure. Your lordship's banker is — is —"

"Drummond — disagreeable people — by no means obliging. I shall certainly change to your house when my accounts are better worth keeping."

"You do me great — great honour; I will just — step — step — step out for a moment — and — and speak to Mr. Dobs; — not but what you may depend on. — Excuse me! 'Morning Chron-chron-Chronicle,' my lord!"

Mr. Douce rose, as if by galvanism, and ran out of the

room, spinning round as he ran, to declare, again and again, that he would not be gone a moment.

"Good little fellow, that — very like an electrified frog!" murmured Vargrave, as he took up the "Morning Chronicle," so especially pointed out to his notice; and turning to the leading article, read a very eloquent attack on himself. Lumley was thick-skinned on such matters; he liked to be attacked, — it showed that he was up in the world.

Presently Mr. Douce returned. To Lord Vargrave's amazement and delight, he was informed that £10,000 would be immediately lodged with Messrs. Drummond. His bill of promise to pay in three months — five per cent interest — was quite sufficient. Three months was a short date; but the bill could be renewed on the same terms, from quarter to quarter, till quite convenient to his lordship to pay. "Would Lord Vargrave do him the honour to dine with him at Caserta next Monday?"

Lord Vargrave tried to affect apathy at his sudden accession of ready money, but really it almost turned his head; he gripped both Mr. Douce's thin, little shivering hands, and was speechless with gratitude and ecstasy. The sum, which doubled the utmost he expected, would relieve him from all his immediate embarrassments. When he recovered his voice, he thanked his dear Mr. Douce with a warmth that seemed to make the little man shrink into a nutshell; and assured him that he would dine with him every Monday in the year — if he was asked! He then longed to depart; but he thought, justly, that to go as soon as he had got what he wanted would look selfish. Accordingly, he reseated himself, and so did Mr. Douce, and the conversation turned upon politics and news; but Mr. Douce, who seemed to regard all things with a commercial eye, contrived, Vargrave hardly knew how, to veer round from the change in the French ministry to the state of the English money-market.

"It really is, indeed, my lord — I say it, I am sure, with concern, a very bad ti-ti-ti-time for men in business, — indeed, for all men; such poor interest in the English fu-fun-funds, and yet speculations are so unsound. I recommended

my friend Sir Giles Grimsby to—to invest some money in the American canals; a most rare res-res-respons-reponsibility, I may say, for me; I am cautious in—in recommending—but Sir Giles was an old friend,—con-con-connection, I may say; but most providentially, all turned out—that is—fell out—as I was sure it would,—thirty per cent,—and the value of the sh-sh-sh-shares doubled. But such things are very rare,—quite godsend, I may say!”

“Well, Mr. Douce, whenever I have money to lay out, I must come and consult you.”

“I shall be most happy at all times to—to advise your lordship; but it is not a thing I’m very fond of. There’s Miss Cameron’s fortune quite l-l-locked up,—three per cents and exchequer bills; why, it might have been a mil-mil-mill-ion by this ti-ti-time, if the good old gentleman—I beg pardon—old—old nobleman, my poor dear friend, had been now alive!”

“Indeed!” said Lumley, greedily, and pricking up his ears; “he was a good manager, my uncle!”

“None better, none better. I may say a genius for business—hem—hem! Miss Cameron a young woman of bus-bus-business, my lord?”

“Not much of that, I fear. A million, did you say?”

“At least!—indeed, at least—money so scarce, speculation so sure in America; great people the Americans, rising people, gi-gi-giants—giants!”

“I am wasting your whole morning,—too bad in me,” said Vargrave, as the clock struck five; “the Lords meet this evening,—important business; once more a thousand thanks to you; good day.”

“A very good day to you, my lord; don’t mention it; glad at any time to ser-ser-serve you,” said Mr. Douce, fidgeting, curveting, and prancing round Lord Vargrave, as the latter walked through the outer office to the carriage.

“Not a step more; you will catch cold. Good-by—on Monday, then, seven o’clock. The House of Lords.”

And Lumley threw himself back in his carriage in high spirits.

CHAPTER IV.

OUBLIÉ de Tullie, et bravé du Sénat.¹VOLTAIRE : *Brutus*, Act ii. sc. 1.

IN the Lords that evening the discussion was animated and prolonged, — it was the last party debate of the session. The astute Opposition did not neglect to bring prominently, though incidentally, forward the question on which it was whispered that there existed some growing difference in the Cabinet. Lord Vargrave rose late. His temper was excited by the good fortune of his day's negotiation; he felt himself of more importance than usual, as a needy man is apt to do when he has got a large sum at his banker's; moreover, he was exasperated by some personal allusions to himself, which had been delivered by a dignified old lord who dated his family from the ark, and was as rich as Cræsus. Accordingly, Vargrave spoke with more than his usual vigour. His first sentences were welcomed with loud cheers; he warmed, he grew vehement, he uttered the most positive and unalterable sentiments upon the question alluded to, he greatly transgressed the discretion which the heads of his party were desirous to maintain, — instead of conciliating without compromising, he irritated, galled, *and* compromised. The angry cheers of the opposite party were loudly re-echoed by the cheers of the more hot-headed on his own side. The premier and some of his colleagues observed, however, a moody silence. The premier once took a note, and then reseated himself, and drew his hat more closely over his brows. It was an ominous sign for Lumley; but he was looking the Opposition in the face, and did not observe it. He sat down in triumph; he had made a most effective and a most mischievous speech, — a combination extremely common. The leader of the Opposition replied

¹ "Forgotten by Tully and bullied by the Senate."

to him with bitter calmness; and when citing some of his sharp sentences, he turned to the premier, and asked, "Are these opinions those also of the noble lord? I call for a reply, — I have a right to demand a reply," Lumley was startled to hear the tone in which his chief uttered the comprehensive and significant "*Hear, hear!*"

At midnight the premier wound up the debate; his speech was short, and characterized by moderation. He came to the question put to him. The House was hushed, — you might have heard a pin drop; the Commons behind the throne pressed forward with anxiety and eagerness on their countenances.

"I am called upon," said the minister, "to declare if those sentiments, uttered by my noble friend, are mine also, as the chief adviser of the Crown. My lords, in the heat of debate every word is not to be scrupulously weighed, and rigidly interpreted." ("Hear, hear," ironically from the Opposition, approvingly from the Treasury benches.) "My noble friend will doubtless be anxious to explain what he intended to say. I hope, nay, I doubt not, that his explanation will be satisfactory to the noble lord, to the House, and to the country; but since I am called upon for a distinct reply to a distinct interrogatory, I will say at once, that if those sentiments be rightly interpreted by the noble lord who spoke last, those sentiments are not mine, and will never animate the conduct of any cabinet of which I am a member." (Long-continued cheering from the Opposition.) "At the same time, I am convinced that my noble friend's meaning has not been rightly construed; and till I hear from himself to the contrary, I will venture to state what I think he designed to convey to your lordships." Here the premier, with a tact that nobody could be duped by, but every one could admire, stripped Lord Vargrave's unlucky sentences of every syllable that could give offence to any one; and left the pointed epigrams and vehement denunciations a most harmless arrangement of commonplace.

The House was much excited; there was a call for Lord Vargrave, and Lord Vargrave promptly rose. It was one of

those dilemmas out of which Lumley was just the man to extricate himself with address. There was so much manly frankness in his manner, there was so much crafty subtlety in his mind! He complained, with proud and honest bitterness, of the construction that had been forced upon his words by the Opposition. "If," he added (and no man knew better the rhetorical effect of the *tu quoque* form of argument), — "if every sentence uttered by the noble lord opposite in his zeal for liberty had, in days now gone by, been construed with equal rigour, or perverted with equal ingenuity, that noble lord had long since been prosecuted as an incendiary, perhaps executed as a traitor!" Vehement cheers from the ministerial benches; cries of "Order!" from the Opposition. A military lord rose to order, and appealed to the Woolsack.

Lumley sat down as if chafed at the interruption; he had produced the effect he had desired, — he had changed the public question at issue into a private quarrel; a new excitement was created; dust was thrown into the eyes of the House. Several speakers rose to accommodate matters; and after half-an-hour of public time had been properly wasted, the noble lord on the one side and the noble lord on the other duly explained, paid each other the highest possible compliments, and Lumley was left to conclude his vindication, which now seemed a comparatively flat matter after the late explosion. He completed his task so as to satisfy, apparently, all parties — for all parties were now tired of the thing, and wanted to go to bed. But the next morning there were whispers about the town, articles in the different papers, evidently by authority, rejoicings among the Opposition, and a general feeling that though the Government might keep together that session, its dissensions would break out before the next meeting of parliament.

As Lumley was wrapping himself in his cloak after this stormy debate, the Marquess of Raby — a peer of large possessions, and one who entirely agreed with Lumley's views — came up to him, and proposed that they should go home together in Lord Raby's carriage. Vargrave willingly consented, and dismissed his own servants.

"You did that admirably, my dear Vargrave!" said Lord Raby, when they were seated in the carriage. "I quite coincide in all your sentiments; I declare my blood boiled when I heard — [the premier] appear half inclined to throw you over. Your hit upon — was first-rate, — he will not get over it for a month; and you extricated yourself well."

"I am glad you approve my conduct, — it comforts me," said Vargrave, feelingly; "at the same time I see all the consequences; but I can brave all for the sake of character and conscience."

"I feel just as you do!" replied Lord Raby, with some warmth; "and if I thought that — meant to yield to this question, I should certainly oppose his administration."

Vargrave shook his head, and held his tongue, which gave Lord Raby a high idea of his discretion.

After a few more observations on political matters, Lord Raby invited Lumley to pay him a visit at his country-seat.

"I am going to Knaresdean next Monday; you know we have races in the park, and really they are sometimes good sport; at all events, it is a very pretty sight. There will be nothing in the Lords now, — the recess is just at hand; and if you can spare the time, Lady Raby and myself will be delighted to see you."

"You may be sure, my dear lord, I cannot refuse your invitation; indeed, I intended to visit your county next week. You know, perhaps, a Mr. Merton."

"Charles Merton? — to be sure; most respectable man, capital fellow, the best parson in the county, — no cant, but thoroughly orthodox; he certainly keeps in his brother, who, though a very active member, is what I call a waverer on certain questions. Have you known Merton long?"

"I don't know him at all as yet; my acquaintance is with his wife and daughter, — a very fine girl, by the by. My ward, Miss Cameron, is staying with them."

"Miss Cameron! Cameron — ah, I understand. I think I have heard that — But gossip does not always tell the truth!"

Lumley smiled significantly, and the carriage now stopped at his door.

"Perhaps you will take a seat in our carriage on Monday?" said Lord Raby.

"Monday? Unhappily I am engaged; but on Tuesday your lordship may expect me."

"Very well; the races begin on Wednesday: we shall have a full house. Good-night."

CHAPTER V.

HOMUNCULI quanti sunt, cum recogito.¹ — PLAUTUS.

It is obvious that for many reasons we must be brief upon the political intrigue in which the scheming spirit of Lord Vargrave was employed. It would, indeed, be scarcely possible to preserve the necessary medium between too plain a revelation and too complex a disguise. It suffices, therefore, very shortly to repeat what the reader has already gathered from what has gone before; namely, that the question at issue was one which has happened often enough in all governments, — one on which the Cabinet was divided, and in which the weaker party was endeavouring to out-trick the stronger.

The malcontents, foreseeing that sooner or later the head of the gathering must break, were again divided among themselves whether to resign, or to stay in and strive to force a resignation on their dissentient colleagues. The richer and the more honest were for the former course; the poorer and the more dependent for the latter. We have seen that the latter policy was that espoused and recommended by Vargrave, who, though not in the Cabinet, always contrived somehow or other to worm out its secrets. At the same time he by no means rejected the other string to his bow. If it were possible so to arrange and to strengthen his faction, that, by the *coup d'état* of a sudden resignation in a formidable body, the whole Government might be broken up,

¹ "When I reflect, how great your little men are in their own consideration!"

and a new one formed from among the resignees, it would obviously be the best plan. But then Lord Vargrave was doubtful of his own strength, and fearful to play into the hands of his colleagues, who might be able to stand even better without himself and his allies, and by conciliating the Opposition take a step onward in political movement, — which might leave Vargrave placeless and powerless for years to come.

He repented his own rashness in the recent debate, which was, indeed, a premature boldness that had sprung out of momentary excitement — for the craftiest orator must be indiscreet sometimes. He spent the next few days in alternately seeking to explain away to one party, and to sound, unite, and consolidate the other. His attempts in the one quarter were received by the premier with the cold politeness of an offended but careful statesman, who believed just as much as he chose, and preferred taking his own opportunity for a breach with a subordinate to risking any imprudence by the gratification of resentment. In the last quarter, the penetrating adventurer saw that his ground was more insecure than he had anticipated. He perceived in dismay and secret rage that many of those most loud in his favour while he was with the Government would desert him the soonest if thrown out. Liked as a subordinate minister, he was viewed with very different eyes the moment it was a question whether, instead of cheering his sentiments, men should trust themselves to his guidance. Some did not wish to displease the Government; others did not seek to weaken but to correct them. One of his stanchest allies in the Commons was a candidate for a peerage; another suddenly remembered that he was second cousin to the premier. Some laughed at the idea of a puppet premier in Lord Saxingham; others insinuated to Vargrave that he himself was not precisely of that standing in the country which would command respect to a new party, of which, if not the head, he would be the mouthpiece. For themselves they knew, admired, and trusted him; but those d—d country gentlemen — and the dull public!

Alarmed, wearied, and disgusted, the schemer saw himself

reduced to submission, for the present at least; and more than ever he felt the necessity of Evelyn's fortune to fall back upon, if the chance of the cards should rob him of his salary. He was glad to escape for a breathing-while from the vexations and harassments that beset him, and looked forward with the eager interest of a sanguine and elastic mind — always escaping from one scheme to another — to his excursion into B——shire.

At the villa of Mr. Douce, Lord Vargrave met a young nobleman who had just succeeded to a property not only large and unencumbered, but of a nature to give him importance in the eyes of politicians. Situated in a very small county, the estates of Lord Doltimore secured to his nomination at least one of the representatives, while a little village at the back of his pleasure-grounds constituted a borough, and returned two members to parliament. Lord Doltimore, just returned from the Continent, had not even taken his seat in the Lords; and though his family connections, such as they were — and they were not very high, and by no means in the fashion — were ministerial, his own opinions were as yet unrevealed.

To this young nobleman Lord Vargrave was singularly attentive. He was well formed to attract men younger than himself, and he eminently succeeded in his designs upon Lord Doltimore's affection.

His lordship was a small, pale man, with a very limited share of understanding, supercilious in manner, elaborate in dress, not ill-natured *au fond*, and with much of the English gentleman in his disposition, — that is, he was honourable in his ideas and actions, whenever his natural dulness and neglected education enabled him clearly to perceive (through the midst of prejudices, the delusions of others, and the false lights of the dissipated society in which he had lived) what was right and what wrong. But his leading characteristics were vanity and conceit. He had lived much with younger sons, cleverer than himself, who borrowed his money, sold him their horses, and won from him at cards. In return they gave him all that species of flattery which young men

can give with so hearty an appearance of cordial admiration. "You certainly have the best horses in Paris. You are really a devilish good fellow, Doltimore. Oh, do you know, Doltimore, what little Désiré says of you? You have certainly turned the girl's head."

This sort of adulation from one sex was not corrected by any great acerbity from the other. Lord Doltimore at the age of twenty-two was a very good *parti*; and, whatever his other deficiencies, he had sense enough to perceive that he received much greater attention — whether from operadancers in search of a friend, or virtuous young ladies in search of a husband — than any of the companions, good-looking though many of them were, with whom he had habitually lived.

"You will not long remain in town now the season is over?" said Vargrave, as after dinner he found himself, by the departure of the ladies, next to Lord Doltimore.

"No, indeed; even in the season I don't much like London. Paris has rather spoiled me for any other place."

"Paris is certainly very charming; the ease of French life has a fascination that our formal ostentation wants. Nevertheless, to a man like you, London must have many attractions."

"Why, I have a good many friends here; but still, after Ascot, it rather bores me."

"Have you any horses on the turf?"

"Not yet; but Legard (you know Legard, perhaps, — a very good fellow) is anxious that I should try my luck. I was very fortunate in the races at Paris — you know we have established racing there. The French take to it quite naturally."

"Ah, indeed! It is so long since I have been in Paris — most exciting amusement! *À propos* of races, I am going down to Lord Raby's to-morrow; I think I saw in one of the morning papers that you had very largely backed a horse entered at Knaresdean."

"Yes, Thunderer — I think of buying Thunderer. Legard — Colonel Legard (he was in the Guards, but he sold out) —

is a good judge, and recommends the purchase. How very odd that you too should be going to Knaresdean!"

"Odd, indeed, but most lucky! We can go together, if you are not better engaged."

Lord Doltimore coloured and hesitated. On the one hand he was a little afraid of being alone with so clever a man; on the other hand, it was an honour, — it was something for him to talk of to Legard. Nevertheless, the shyness got the better of the vanity. He excused himself; he feared he was engaged to take down Legard.

Lumley smiled, and changed the conversation; and so agreeable did he make himself, that when the party broke up, and Lumley had just shaken hands with his host, Doltimore came to him, and said in a little confusion, —

"I think I can put off Legard — if — if you —"

"That's delightful! What time shall we start? — need not get down much before dinner — one o'clock?"

"Oh, yes! not too long before dinner; one o'clock will be a little too early."

"Two then. Where are you staying?"

"At Fenton's."

"I will call for you. Good-night! I long to see Thunderer!"

CHAPTER VI.

LA santé de l'âme n'est pas plus assurée que celle du corps; et quoique l'on paraisse éloigné des passions, on n'est pas moins en danger de s'y laisser emporter que de tomber malade quand on se porte bien.¹ — LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

IN spite of the efforts of Maltravers to shun all occasions of meeting Evelyn, they were necessarily sometimes thrown together in the round of provincial hospitalities; and cer-

¹ "The health of the soul is not more sure than that of the body; and although we may appear free from passions, there is not the less danger of their attack than of falling sick at the moment we are well."

tainly, if either Mr. Merton or Caroline (the shrewder observer of the two) had ever formed any suspicion that Evelyn had made a conquest of Maltravers, his manner at such times effectually removed it.

Maltravers was a man to feel deeply, but no longer a boy to yield to every tempting impulse. I have said that FORTITUDE was his favourite virtue, but fortitude is the virtue of great and rare occasions; there was another, equally hard-favoured and unshowy, which he took as the staple of active and every-day duties, and that virtue was JUSTICE. Now, in earlier life, he had been enamoured of the conventional Florimel that we call HONOUR, — a shifting and shadowy phantom, that is but the reflex of the opinion of the time and clime. But justice has in it something permanent and solid; and out of justice arises the real not the false honour.

“Honour!” said Maltravers, — “honour is to justice as the flower to the plant, — its efflorescence, its bloom, its consummation! But honour that does not spring from justice is but a piece of painted rag, an artificial rose, which the men-milliners of society would palm upon us as more natural than the true.”

This principle of justice Maltravers sought to carry out in all things — not, perhaps, with constant success; for what practice can always embody theory? — but still, at least his endeavour at success was constant. This, perhaps, it was which had ever kept him from the excesses to which exuberant and liberal natures are prone, from the extravagances of pseudo-genius.

“No man, for instance,” he was wont to say, “can be embarrassed in his own circumstances, and not cause embarrassment to others. Without economy, who can be just? And what are charity, generosity, but the poetry and the beauty of justice?”

No man ever asked Maltravers twice for a just debt; and no man ever once asked him to fulfil a promise. You felt that, come what would, you might rely upon his word. To him might have been applied the witty eulogium passed by Johnson upon a certain nobleman: “If he had promised you

an acorn, and the acorn season failed in England, he would have sent to Norway for one!"

It was not, therefore, the mere Norman and chivalrous spirit of honour, which he had worshipped in youth as a part of the Beautiful and the Becoming, but which in youth had yielded to temptation, as a *sentiment* ever must yield to a passion, but it was the more hard, stubborn, and reflective *principle*, which was the later growth of deeper and nobler wisdom, that regulated the conduct of Maltravers in this crisis of his life. Certain it is, that he had never but once loved as he loved Evelyn; and yet that he never yielded so little to the passion.

"If engaged to another," thought he, "that engagement it is not for a third person to attempt to dissolve. I am the last to form a right judgment of the strength or weakness of the bonds which unite her to Vargrave, for my emotions would prejudice me despite myself. I may fancy that her betrothed is not worthy of her, — but that is for her to decide. While the bond lasts, who can be justified in tempting her to break it?"

Agreeably to these notions, which the world may, perhaps, consider overstrained, whenever Maltravers met Evelyn, he intrenched himself in a rigid and almost a chilling formality. How difficult this was with one so simple and ingenuous! Poor Evelyn! she thought she had offended him; she longed to ask him her offence, — perhaps, in her desire to rouse his genius into exertion, she had touched some secret sore, some latent wound of the memory? She recalled all their conversations again and again. Ah, why could they not be renewed? Upon her fancy and her thoughts Maltravers had made an impression not to be obliterated. She wrote more frequently than ever to Lady Vargrave, and the name of Maltravers was found in every page of her correspondence.

One evening, at the house of a neighbour, Miss Cameron (with the Mertons) entered the room almost in the same instant as Maltravers. The party was small, and so few had yet arrived that it was impossible for Maltravers, without marked rudeness, to avoid his friends from the rectory; and

Mrs. Merton, placing herself next to Evelyn, graciously motioned to Maltravers to occupy the third vacant seat on the sofa, of which she filled the centre.

"We grudge all your improvements, Mr. Maltravers, since they cost us your society. But we know that our dull circle must seem tame to one who has seen so much. However, we expect to offer you an inducement soon in Lord Vargrave. What a lively, agreeable person he is!"

Maltravers raised his eyes to Evelyn, calmly and penetratingly, at the latter part of this speech. He observed that she turned pale, and sighed involuntarily.

"He had great spirits when I knew him," said he; "and he had then less cause to make him happy."

Mrs. Merton smiled, and turned rather pointedly towards Evelyn.

Maltravers continued, "I never met the late lord. He had none of the vivacity of his nephew, I believe."

"I have heard that he was very severe," said Mrs. Merton, lifting her glass towards a party that had just entered.

"Severe!" exclaimed Evelyn. "Ah, if you could have known him! the kindest, the most indulgent—no one ever loved me as he did." She paused, for she felt her lip quiver.

"I beg your pardon, my dear," said Mrs. Merton, coolly. Mrs. Merton had no idea of the pain inflicted by *treading upon a feeling*. Maltravers was touched, and Mrs. Merton went on. "No wonder he was kind to you, Evelyn,—a brute would be that; but he was generally considered a stern man."

"I never saw a stern look, I never heard a harsh word; nay, I do not remember that he ever even used the word 'command,'" said Evelyn, almost angrily.

Mrs. Merton was about to reply, when suddenly seeing a lady whose little girl had been ill of the measles, her motherly thoughts flowed into a new channel, and she fluttered away in that sympathy which unites all the heads of a growing family. Evelyn and Maltravers were left alone.

"You do not remember your father, I believe?" said Maltravers.

"No father but Lord Vargrave; while he lived, I never knew the loss of one."

"Does your mother resemble you?"

"Ah, I wish I could think so; it is the sweetest countenance!"

"Have you no picture of her?"

"None; she would never consent to sit."

"Your father was a Cameron; I have known some of that name."

"No relation of ours: my mother says we have none living."

"And have we no chance of seeing Lady Vargrave in B——shire?"

"She never leaves home; but I hope to return soon to Brook-Green."

Maltravers sighed, and the conversation took a new turn.

"I have to thank you for the books you so kindly sent; I ought to have returned them ere this," said Evelyn.

"I have no use for them. Poetry has lost its charm for me, — especially that species of poetry which unites with the method and symmetry something of the coldness of Art. How did you like Alfieri?"

"His language is a kind of Spartan French," answered Evelyn, in one of those happy expressions which every now and then showed the quickness of her natural talent.

"Yes," said Maltravers, smiling, "the criticism is acute. Poor Alfieri! in his wild life and his stormy passions he threw out all the redundance of his genius; and his poetry is but the representative of his thoughts, not his emotions. Happier the man of genius who lives upon his reason, and wastes feeling only on his verse!"

"You do not think that we *waste* feeling upon human beings?" said Evelyn, with a pretty laugh.

"Ask me that question when you have reached my years, and can look upon fields on which you have lavished your warmest hopes, your noblest aspirations, your tenderest affections, and see the soil all profitless and barren. 'Set not your heart on the things of earth,' saith the Preacher."

Evelyn was affected by the tone, the words, and the melan-

choly countenance of the speaker. "You, of all men, ought not to think thus," said she, with a sweet eagerness; "you who have done so much to awaken and to soften the heart in others; you—who—" she stopped short, and added, more gravely, "Ah, Mr. Maltravers, I cannot reason with you, but I can hope you will refute your own philosophy."

"Were your wish fulfilled," answered Maltravers, almost with sternness, and with an expression of great pain in his compressed lips, "I should have to thank you for much misery." He rose abruptly, and turned away.

"How have I offended him?" thought Evelyn, sorrowfully; "I never speak but to wound him. What *have* I done?"

She could have wished, in her simple kindness, to follow him, and make peace; but he was now in a coterie of strangers; and shortly afterwards he left the room, and she did not see him again for weeks.

CHAPTER VII.

NIHIL est aliud magnum quam multa minuta.¹ — VETUS. AUCTOR.

AN anxious event disturbed the smooth current of cheerful life at Merton Rectory. One morning when Evelyn came down, she missed little Sophy, who had contrived to establish for herself the undisputed privilege of a stool beside Miss Cameron at breakfast. Mrs. Merton appeared with a graver face than usual. Sophy was unwell, was feverish; the scarlet fever had been in the neighbourhood. Mrs. Merton was very uneasy.

"It is the more unlucky, Caroline," added the mother, turning to Miss Merton, "because to-morrow, you know, we were to have spent a few days at Knaresdean to see the races. If poor Sophy does not get better, I fear you and Miss Cameron must go without me. I can send to Mrs. Hare to be your chaperon; she would be delighted."

¹ "There is nothing so great as the collection of the minute."

"Poor Sophy!" said Caroline; "I am very sorry to hear she is unwell; but I think Taylor would take great care of her; you surely need not stay, unless she is much worse."

Mrs. Merton, who, tame as she seemed, was a fond and attentive mother, shook her head and said nothing; but Sophy was much worse before noon. The doctor was sent for, and pronounced it to be the scarlet fever.

It was now necessary to guard against the infection. Caroline had had the complaint, and she willingly shared in her mother's watch of love for two or three hours. Mrs. Merton gave up the party. Mrs. Hare (the wife of a rich squire in the neighbourhood) was written to, and that lady willingly agreed to take charge of Caroline and her friend.

Sophy had been left asleep. When Mrs. Merton returned to her bed, she found Evelyn quietly stationed there. This alarmed her, for Evelyn had never had the scarlet fever, and had been forbidden the sick-room. But poor little Sophy had waked and querulously asked for her dear Evy; and Evy, who had been hovering round the room, heard the inquiry from the garrulous nurse, and come in she would; and the child gazed at her so beseechingly, when Mrs. Merton entered, and said so piteously, "Don't take Evy away," that Evelyn stoutly declared that she was not the least afraid of infection, and stay she must. Nay, her share in the nursing would be the more necessary since Caroline was to go to Knaresdean the next day.

"But you go too, my dear Miss Cameron?"

"Indeed I could not. I don't care for races, I never wished to go, I would much sooner have stayed; and I am sure Sophy will not get well without me,—will you, dear?"

"Oh, yes, yes; if I'm to keep you from the nice races, I should be worse if I thought that."

"But I don't like the nice races, Sophy, as your sister Carry does; she must go,—they can't do without her; but nobody knows me, so I shall not be missed."

"I can't hear of such a thing," said Mrs. Merton, with tears in her eyes; and Evelyn said no more then. But the next morning Sophy was still worse, and the mother was too

anxious and too sad to think more of ceremony and politeness, so Evelyn stayed.

A momentary pang shot across Evelyn's breast when all was settled; but she suppressed the sigh which accompanied the thought that she had lost the only opportunity she might have for weeks of seeing Maltravers. To that chance she had indeed looked forward with interest and timid pleasure. The chance was lost; but why should it vex her,— what was he to her?

Caroline's heart smote her, as she came into the room in her lilac bonnet and new dress; and little Sophy, turning on her eyes which, though languid, still expressed a child's pleasure at the sight of finery, exclaimed, "How nice and pretty you look, Carry! Do take Evy with you,— Evy looks pretty too!"

Caroline kissed the child in silence, and paused irresolute; glanced at her dress, and then at Evelyn, who smiled on her without a thought of envy; and she had half a mind to stay too, when her mother entered with a letter from Lord Vargrave. It was short: he should be at the Knaresdean races, hoped to meet them there, and accompany them home. This information re-decided Caroline, while it rewarded Evelyn. In a few minutes more, Mrs. Hare arrived; and Caroline, glad to escape, perhaps, her own compunction, hurried into the carriage, with a hasty "God bless you all! Don't fret — I'm sure she will be well to-morrow; and mind, Evelyn, you don't catch the fever!" Mr. Merton looked grave and sighed, as he handed her into the carriage; but when, seated there, she turned round and kissed her hand at him, she looked so handsome and distinguished, that a sentiment of paternal pride smoothed down his vexation at her want of feeling. He himself gave up the visit; but a little time after, when Sophy fell into a tranquil sleep, he thought he might venture to canter across the country to the race-ground, and return to dinner.

Days — nay, a whole week passed, the races were over, but Caroline had not returned. Meanwhile, Sophy's fever left

her; she could quit her bed, her room; she could come downstairs now, and the family was happy. It is astonishing how the least ailment in those little things stops the wheels of domestic life! Evelyn fortunately had not caught the fever: she was pale, and somewhat reduced by fatigue and confinement; but she was amply repaid by the mother's swimming look of quiet gratitude, the father's pressure of the hand, Sophy's recovery, and her own good heart. They had heard twice from Caroline, putting off her return: Lady Raby was so kind, she could not get away till the party broke up; she was so glad to hear such an account of Sophy.

Lord Vargrave had not yet arrived at the rectory to stay; but he had twice ridden over, and remained there some hours. He exerted himself to the utmost to please Evelyn; and she — who, deceived by his manners, and influenced by the recollections of long and familiar acquaintance, was blinded to his real character — reproached herself more bitterly than ever for her repugnance to his suit and her ungrateful hesitation to obey the wishes of her stepfather.

To the Mertons, Lumley spoke with good-natured praise of Caroline; she was so much admired; she was the beauty at Knaresdean. A certain young friend of his, Lord Doltimore, was evidently smitten. The parents thought much over the ideas conjured up by that last sentence.

One morning, the garrulous Mrs. Hare, the gossip of the neighbourhood, called at the rectory; she had returned, two days before, from Knaresdean; and she, too, had her tale to tell of Caroline's conquests.

"I assure you, my dear Mrs. Merton, if we had not all known that his heart was pre-occupied, we should have thought that Lord Vargrave was her warmest admirer. Most charming man, Lord Vargrave! but as for Lord Doltimore, it was quite a flirtation. Excuse *me*: no scandal, you know, ha, ha! a fine young man, but stiff and reserved,—not the fascination of Lord Vargrave."

"Does Lord Raby return to town, or is he now at Knaresdean for the autumn?"

"He goes on Friday, I believe: very few of the guests are

left now. Lady A. and Lord B., and Lord Vargrave and your daughter, and Mr. Legard and Lord Doltimore, and Mrs. and the Misses Cipher; all the rest went the same day I did."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Merton, in some surprise.

"Ah, I read your thoughts: you wonder that Miss Caroline has not come back,—is not that it? But perhaps Lord Doltimore — ha, ha! — no scandal now — do excuse *me*!"

"Was Mr. Maltravers at Knaresdean?" asked Mrs. Merton, anxious to change the subject, and unprepared with any other question. Evelyn was cutting out a paper horse for Sophy, who — all her high spirits flown — was lying on the sofa, and wistfully following her fairy fingers. "Naughty Evy, you have cut off the horse's head!"

"Mr. Maltravers? No, I think not; no, he was not there. Lord Raby asked him pointedly to come, and was, I know, much disappointed that he did not. But *à propos* of Mr. Maltravers: I met him not a quarter of an hour ago, this morning, as I was coming to you. You know we have leave to come through his park, and as I was in the park at the time, I stopped the carriage to speak to him. I told him that I was coming here, and that you had had the scarlet fever in the house, which was the reason you had not gone to the races; and he turned quite pale, and seemed so alarmed. I said we were all afraid that Miss Cameron should catch it; and, excuse me — ah, ah! — no scandal, I hope — but —"

"Mr. Maltravers," said the butler, throwing open the door.

Maltravers entered with a quick and even a hurried step. He stopped short when he saw Evelyn; and his whole countenance was instantly lightened up by a joyous expression, which as suddenly died away.

"This is kind, indeed," said Mrs. Merton; "it is so long since we have seen you."

"I have been very much occupied," muttered Maltravers, almost inaudibly, and seated himself next Evelyn. "I only just heard — that — that you had sickness in the house. Miss Cameron, you look pale — you — you have not suffered, I hope?"

"No, I am quite well," said Evelyn, with a smile; and she felt happy that her friend was kind to her once more.

"It's only me, Mr. Ernest," said Sophy; "you have forgot me."

Maltravers hastened to vindicate himself from the charge, and Sophy and he were soon made excellent friends again.

Mrs. Hare, whom surprise at this sudden meeting had hitherto silenced, and who longed to shape into elegant periphrasis the common adage, "Talk of," etc., now once more opened her budget. She tattled on, first to one, then to the other, then to all, till she had tattled herself out of breath; and then the orthodox half-hour was expired, and the bell was rung, and the carriage ordered, and Mrs. Hare rose to depart.

"Do just come to the door, Mrs. Merton," said she, "and look at my pony-phaeton, it is so pretty; Lady Raby admires it so much; you ought to have just such another." As she spoke, she favoured Mrs. Merton with a significant glance, that said, as plainly as glance could say, "I have something to communicate." Mrs. Merton took the hint, and followed the good lady out of the room.

"Do you know, my dear Mrs. Merton," said Mrs. Hare, in a whisper, when they were safe in the billiard-room, that interposed between the apartment they had left and the hall; "do you know whether Lord Vargrave and Mr. Maltravers are very good friends?"

"No, indeed; why do you ask?"

"Oh, because when I was speaking to Lord Vargrave about him, he shook his head; and really I don't remember what his lordship said, but he seemed to speak as if there was a little soreness. And then he inquired very anxiously if Mr. Maltravers was much at the rectory; and looked discomposed when he found you were such near neighbours. You'll excuse me, you know — ha, ha! but we're such old friends! — and if Lord Vargrave is coming to stay here, it might be unpleasant to meet — you'll excuse me. I took the liberty to tell him he need not be jealous of Mr. Maltravers — ha, ha! — not a marrying man at all. But I did think Miss Caroline was the

attraction — you'll excuse me — no scandal — ha, ha! But, after all, Lord Doltimore must be the man. Well, good morning, I thought I'd just give you this hint. Is not the phaeton pretty? Kind compliments to Mr. Merton."

And the lady drove off.

During this confabulation, Maltravers and Evelyn were left alone with Sophy. Maltravers had continued to lean over the child, and appeared listening to her prattle; while Evelyn, having risen to shake hands with Mrs. Hare, did not reseal herself, but went to the window, and busied herself with a flowerstand in the recess.

"Oh, very fine, Mr. Ernest," said Sophy (always pronouncing that proper name as if it ended in *th*), "you care very much for us to stay away so long, — don't he, Evy? I've a great mind not to speak to you, sir, that I have!"

"That would be too heavy a punishment, Miss Sophy, — only, luckily, it would punish yourself; you could not live without talking — talk — talk — talk!"

"But I might never have talked more, Mr. Ernest, if Mamma and pretty Evy had not been so kind to me;" and the child shook her head mournfully, as if she had *pitié de soi-même*. But you won't stay away so long again, will you? Sophy play to-morrow; come to-morrow, and swing Sophy; no nice swinging since you've been gone."

While Sophy spoke Evelyn turned half round, as if to hear Maltravers answer; he hesitated, and Evelyn spoke.

"You must not tease Mr. Maltravers so; Mr. Maltravers has too much to do to come to us."

Now this was a very pettish speech in Evelyn, and her cheek glowed while she spoke; but an arch, provoking smile was on her lips.

"It can be a privation only to me, Miss Cameron," said Maltravers, rising, and attempting in vain to resist the impulse that drew him towards the window. The reproach in her tone and words at once pained and delighted him; and then this scene, the suffering child, brought back to him his first interview with Evelyn herself. He forgot, for the moment, the lapse of time, the new ties she had formed, his own resolutions.

"That is a bad compliment to us," answered Evelyn, ingenuously; "do you think we are so little worthy your society as not to value it? But, perhaps" (she added, sinking her voice) "perhaps you have been offended — perhaps I — I — said — something that — that hurt you!"

"You!" repeated Maltravers, with emotion.

Sophy, who had been attentively listening, here put in, "Shake hands and make it up with Evy — you've been quarrelling, naughty Ernest!"

Evelyn laughed, and tossed back her sunny ringlets. "I think Sophy is right," said she, with enchanting simplicity; "let us make it up," and she held out her hand to Maltravers.

Maltravers pressed the fair hand to his lips. "Alas!" said he, affected with various feelings which gave a tremor to his deep voice, "your only fault is that your society makes me discontented with my solitary home; and as solitude must be my fate in life, I seek to inure myself to it betimes."

Here — whether opportunely or not, it is for the reader to decide — Mrs. Merton returned to the room.

She apologized for her absence, talked of Mrs. Hare and the little Master Hares, — fine boys, but noisy; and then she asked Maltravers if he had seen Lord Vargrave since his lordship had been in the county. Maltravers replied, with coldness, that he had not had that honour: that Vargrave had called on him in his way from the rectory the other day, but that he was from home, and that he had not seen him for some years.

"He is a person of most prepossessing manners," said Mrs. Merton.

"Certainly, — most prepossessing."

"And very clever."

"He has great talents."

"He seems most amiable."

Maltravers bowed, and glanced towards Evelyn, whose face, however, was turned from him.

The turn the conversation had taken was painful to the visitor, and he rose to depart.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Merton, "you will meet Lord Vargrave at dinner to-morrow; he will stay with us a few days, — as long as he can be spared."

Maltravers meet Lord Vargrave! the happy Vargrave, the betrothed to Evelyn! Maltravers witness the familiar rights, the enchanting privileges, accorded to another! and that other one whom he could not believe worthy of Evelyn! He writhed at the picture the invitation conjured up.

"You are very kind, my dear Mrs. Merton, but I expect a visitor at Burleigh, — an old and dear friend, Mr. Cleveland."

"Mr. Cleveland! — we shall be delighted to see him too. We knew him many years ago, during your minority, when he used to visit Burleigh two or three times a year."

"He is changed since then; he is often an invalid. I fear I cannot answer for him; but he will call as soon as he arrives, and apologize for himself."

Maltravers then hastily took his departure. He would not trust himself to do more than bow distantly to Evelyn; she looked at him reproachfully. So, then, it was really premeditated and resolved upon — his absence from the rectory; and why? She was grieved, she was offended — but more grieved than offended, — perhaps because esteem, interest, admiration, are more tolerant and charitable than love.

CHAPTER VIII.

Arethusa. 'Tis well, my lord, your courting of ladies.

Claremont. Sure this lady has a good turn done her against her will.

PHILASTER.

IN the breakfast-room at Knaresdean, the same day, and almost at the same hour, in which occurred the scene and conversation at the rectory recorded in our last chapter, sat Lord Vargrave and Caroline alone. The party had dispersed, as was usual, at noon. They heard at a distance

the sounds of the billiard-balls. Lord Doltimore was playing with Colonel Legard, one of the best players in Europe, but who, fortunately for Doltimore, had of late made it a rule never to play for money. Mrs. and the Misses Cipher, and most of the guests, were in the billiard-room looking on. Lady Raby was writing letters, and Lord Raby riding over his home farm. Caroline and Lumley had been for some time in close and earnest conversation. Miss Merton was seated in a large armchair, much moved, with her handkerchief to her eyes. Lord Vargrave, with his back to the chimney-piece, was bending down and speaking in a very low voice, while his quick eye glanced, ever and anon, from the lady's countenance to the windows, to the doors, to be prepared against any interruption.

"No, my dear friend," said he, "believe me that I am sincere. My feelings for you are, indeed, such as no words can paint."

"Then why —"

"Why wish you wedded to another; why wed another myself? Caroline, I have often before explained to you that we are in this the victims of an inevitable fate. It is absolutely necessary that I should wed Miss Cameron. I never deceived you from the first. I should have loved her, — my heart would have accompanied my hand, but for your too seductive beauty, your superior mind! — yes, Caroline, your mind attracted me more than your beauty. Your mind seemed kindred to my own, — inspired with the proper and wise ambition which regards the fools of the world as puppets, as counters, as chessmen. For myself, a very angel from heaven could not make me give up the great game of life, yield to my enemies, slip from the ladder, unravel the web I have woven! Share my heart, my friendship, my schemes! this is the true and dignified affection that should exist between minds like ours; all the rest is the prejudice of children."

"Vargrave, I am ambitious, worldly: I own it; but I could give up all for you!"

"You think so, for you do not know the sacrifice. You see me now apparently rich, in power, courted, and this fate you

are willing to share; and this fate you *should* share, were it the real one I could bestow on you. But reverse the medal. Deprived of office, fortune gone, debts pressing, destitution notorious, the ridicule of embarrassments, the disrepute attached to poverty and defeated ambition, an exile in some foreign town on the poor pension to which alone I should be entitled, a mendicant on the public purse; and that, too, so eaten into by demands and debts, that there is not a grocer in the next market-town who would envy the income of the retired minister! Retire, fallen, despised, in the prime of life, in the zenith of my hopes! Suppose that I could bear this for myself, could I bear it for you? *You*, born to be the ornament of courts! And you — could you see me thus — life embittered, career lost — and feel, generous as you are, that your love had entailed on me, on us both, on our children, this miserable lot! Impossible, Caroline! we are too wise for such romance. It is not because we love too little, but because our love is worthy of each other, that we disdain to make love a curse! We cannot wrestle against the world, but we may shake hands with it, and worm the miser out of its treasures. My heart must be ever yours; my hand must be Miss Cameron's. Money I must have, — my whole career depends on it. It is literally with me the highwayman's choice, — money or life."

Vargrave paused, and took Caroline's hand.

"I cannot reason with you," said she; "you know the strange empire you have obtained over me, and, certainly, in spite of all that has passed (and Caroline turned pale) I could bear anything rather than that you should hereafter reproach me for selfish disregard of your interests, — your just ambition."

"My noble friend! I do not say that I shall not feel a deep and sharp pang at seeing you wed another; but I shall be consoled by the thought that I have assisted to procure for you a station worthier of your merits than that which I can offer. Lord Doltimore is rich, — you will teach him to employ his riches well; he is weak, — your intellect will govern him; he is in love, — your beauty will suffice to preserve his regard. Ah, we shall be dear friends to the last!"

More — but to the same effect — did this able and crafty villain continue to address to Caroline, whom he alternately soothed, irritated, flattered, and revolted. Love him she certainly did, as far as love in her could extend; but perhaps his rank, his reputation, had served to win her affection; and, not knowing his embarrassments, she had encouraged a worldly hope that if Evelyn should reject his hand it might be offered to her. Under this impression she had trifled, she had coquetted, she had played with the serpent till it had coiled around her; and she could not escape its fascination and its folds. She was sincere, — she could have resigned much for Lord Vargrave; but his picture startled and appalled her. For difficulties in a palace she might be prepared; perhaps even for some privations in a *cottage ornée*, — but certainly not for penury in a lodging-house! She listened by degrees with more attention to Vargrave's description of the power and homage that would be hers if she could secure Lord Doltimore — she listened, and was in part consoled. But the thought of Evelyn again crossed her; and perhaps with natural jealousy was mingled some compunction at the fate to which Lord Vargrave thus coldly appeared to condemn one so lovely and so innocent.

"But do not, Vargrave," she said, "do not be too sanguine; Evelyn may reject you. She does not see you with my eyes; it is only a sense of honour that, as yet, forbids her openly to refuse the fulfilment of an engagement from which I know that she shrinks; and if she does refuse, and you be free, — and I another's —"

"Even in that case," interrupted Vargrave, "I must turn to the Golden Idol; my rank and name must buy me an heir-ess, if not so endowed as Evelyn, wealthy enough, at least, to take from my wheels the drag-chain of disreputable debt. But Evelyn — I will not doubt of her! her heart is still unoccupied!"

"True; as yet her affections are not engaged."

"And this Maltravers — she is romantic, I fancy — did he seem captivated by her beauty or her fortune?"

"No, indeed, I think not, he has been very little with us

of late. He talked to her more as to a child, — there is a disparity of years.”

“I am many years older than Maltravers,” muttered Vargrave, moodily.

“You — but your *manner* is livelier, and, therefore, younger!”

“Fair flatterer! Maltravers does not love me I fear his report of my character — ”

“I never heard him speak of you, Vargrave, and I will do Evelyn the justice to say, that precisely as she does not love she esteems and respects you.”

“Esteems! respects! these are the feelings for a prudent Hymen,” said Vargrave, with a smile. “But, hark! I don’t hear the billiard-balls; they may find us here, — we had better separate.”

Lord Vargrave lounged into the billiard-room. The young men had just finished playing, and were about to visit Thunderer, who had won the race, and was now the property of Lord Doltimore.

Vargrave accompanied them to the stables; and after concealing his ignorance of horseflesh as well as he could, beneath a profusion of compliments on fore-hand, hind-quarters, breeding, bone, substance, and famous points, he contrived to draw Doltimore into the courtyard, while Colonel Legard remained in converse high with the head groom.

“Doltimore, I leave Knaresdean to-morrow; you go to London, I suppose? Will you take a little packet for me to the Home Office?”

“Certainly, when I go; but I think of staying a few days with Legard’s uncle — the old admiral; he has a hunting-box in the neighbourhood, and has asked us both over.”

“Oh, I can detect the attraction; but certainly it is a fair one, — the handsomest girl in the county; pity she has no money.”

“I don’t care for money,” said Lord Doltimore, colouring, and settling his chin in his neckcloth; “but you are mistaken; I have no thoughts that way. Miss Merton is a very fine girl; but I doubt much if she cares for me. I would

never marry any woman who was not very much in love with me." And Lord Doltimore laughed rather foolishly.

"You are more modest than clear-sighted," said Vargrave, smiling; "but mark my words, — I predict that the beauty of next season will be a certain Caroline Lady Doltimore."

The conversation dropped.

"I think that will be settled well," said Vargrave to himself, as he was dressing for dinner. "Caroline will manage Doltimore, and I shall manage one vote in the Lords and three in the Commons. I have already talked him into proper politics; a trifle all this, to be sure. but I had nothing else to amuse me, and one must never lose an occasion. Besides, Doltimore is rich, and rich friends are always useful. I have Caroline, too, in my power, and she may be of service with respect to this Evelyn, who, instead of loving, I half hate: she has crossed my path, robbed me of wealth; and now, if she does refuse me — but no, I will not think of *that*!"



CHAPTER IX.

Out of our reach the gods have laid

Of time to come the event;

And laugh to see the fools afraid

Of what the knaves invent. — SEDLEY, *from Lycophron.*

THE next day Caroline returned to the rectory in Lady Raby's carriage; and two hours after her arrival came Lord Vargrave. Mr. Merton had secured the principal persons in the neighbourhood to meet a guest so distinguished, and Lord Vargrave, bent on shining in the eyes of Evelyn, charmed all with his affability and wit. Evelyn, he thought, seemed pale and dispirited. He pertinaciously devoted himself to her all the evening. Her ripening understanding was better able than heretofore to appreciate his abilities; yet, inwardly, she drew comparisons between his conversation and that of

Maltravers, not to the advantage of the former. There was much that amused but nothing that interested in Lord Vargrave's fluent ease. When he attempted sentiment, the vein was hard and hollow; he was only at home on worldly topics. Caroline's spirits were, as usual in society, high, but her laugh seemed forced, and her eye absent.

The next day, after breakfast, Lord Vargrave walked alone to Burleigh. As he crossed the copse that bordered the park, a large Persian greyhound sprang towards him, barking loudly; and, lifting his eyes, he perceived the form of a man walking slowly along one of the paths that intersected the wood. He recognized Maltravers. They had not till then encountered since their meeting a few weeks before Florence's death; and a pang of conscience came across the schemer's cold heart. Years rolled away from the past; he recalled the young, generous, ardent man, whom, ere the character or career of either had been developed, he had called his friend. He remembered their wild adventures and gay follies, in climes where they had been all in all to each other; and the beardless boy, whose heart and purse were ever open to him, and to whose very errors of youth and inexperienced passion he, the elder and the wiser, had led and tempted, rose before him in contrast to the grave and melancholy air of the baffled and solitary man, who now slowly approached him, — the man whose proud career he had served to thwart, whose heart his schemes had prematurely soured, whose best years had been consumed in exile, — a sacrifice to the grave which a selfish and dishonourable villany had prepared! Cesarini, the inmate of a mad-house, Florence in her shroud, — such were the visions the sight of Maltravers conjured up. And to the soul which the unwonted and momentary remorse awakened, a boding voice whispered, "And thinkest thou that thy schemes shall prosper, and thy aspirations succeed?" For the first time in his life, perhaps, the unimaginative Vargrave felt the mystery of a presentiment of warning and of evil.

The two men met, and with an emotion which seemed that of honest and real feeling, Lumley silently held out his hand, and half turned away his head.

"Lord Vargrave!" said Maltravers, with an equal agitation, "it is long since we have encountered."

"Long, — very long," answered Lumley, striving hard to regain his self-possession; "years have changed us both; but I trust it has still left in you, as it has in me, the remembrance of our old friendship."

Maltravers was silent, and Lord Vargrave continued, —

"You do not answer me, Maltravers. Can political differences, opposite pursuits, or the mere lapse of time, have sufficed to create an irrevocable gulf between us? Why may we not be friends again?"

"Friends!" echoed Maltravers; "at our age that word is not so lightly spoken, that tie is not so unthinkingly formed, as when we were younger men."

"But may not the old tie be renewed?"

"Our ways in life are different; and were I to scan your motives and career with the scrutinizing eyes of friendship, it might only serve to separate us yet more. I am sick of the great juggle of ambition, and I have no sympathy left for those who creep into the pint-bottle, or swallow the naked sword."

"If you despise the exhibition, why, then, let us laugh at it together, for I am as cynical as yourself."

"Ah," said Maltravers with a smile, half mournful, half bitter, "but are you not one of the Impostors?"

"Who ought better to judge of the Eleusiniana than one of the Initiated? But seriously, why on earth should political differences part private friendship? Thank Heaven! such has never been my maxim."

"If the differences be the result of honest convictions on either side, — no; but are you honest, Lumley?"

"Faith, I have got into the habit of thinking so; and habit's a second nature. However, I dare say we shall yet meet in the arena, so I must not betray my weak points. How is it, Maltravers, that they see so little of you at the rectory? You are a great favourite there. Have you any living that Charley Merton could hold with his own? You shake your head. And what think you of Miss Cameron, my intended?"

"You speak lightly. Perhaps you —"

"Feel deeply, — you were going to say. I do. In the hand of my ward, Evelyn Cameron, I trust to obtain at once the domestic happiness to which I have as yet been a stranger, and the wealth necessary to my career."

Lord Vargrave continued, after a short pause, "Though my avocations have separated us so much, I have no doubt of her steady affection, — and, I may add, of her sense of honour. She alone can repair to me what else had been injustice in my uncle." He then proceeded to repeat the moral obligations which the late lord had imposed on Evelyn, — obligations that he greatly magnified. Maltravers listened attentively, and said little.

"And these obligations being fairly considered," added Vargrave, with a smile, "I think, even had I rivals, that they could scarcely in honour attempt to break an existing engagement."

"Not while the engagement lasted," answered Maltravers; "not till one or the other had declined to fulfil it, and therefore left both free: but I trust it will be an alliance in which all but affection will be forgotten; that of honour alone would be but a harsh tie."

"Assuredly," said Vargrave; and, as if satisfied with what had passed, he turned the conversation, — praised Burleigh, spoke of county matters, resumed his habitual gayety, though it was somewhat subdued, and promising to call again soon, he at last took his leave.

Maltravers pursued his solitary rambles, and his commune with himself was stern and searching.

"And so," thought he, "this prize is reserved for Vargrave! Why should I deem him unworthy of the treasure? May he not be worthier, at all events, than this soured temper and erring heart? And he is assured too of her affection! Why this jealous pang? Why can the fountain within never be exhausted? Why, through so many scenes and sufferings, have I still retained the vain madness of my youth, — the haunting susceptibility to love? This is my latest folly."

BOOK IV.

Γυναικὸς οὐδὲ χρῆμ' ἀνὴρ ληίζεται
'Εσθλῆς ἄμεινον. — SIMONIDES.

"A virtuous woman is man's greatest pride."

CHAPTER I.

ABROAD uneasy, nor content at home.

And Wisdom shows the ill without the cure.

HAMMOND: *Elegies.*

Two or three days after the interview between Lord Vargrave and Maltravers, the solitude of Burleigh was relieved by the arrival of Mr. Cleveland. The good old gentleman, when free from attacks of the gout, which were now somewhat more frequent than formerly, was the same cheerful and intelligent person as ever. Amiable, urbane, accomplished, and benevolent, there was just enough worldliness in Cleveland's nature to make his views sensible as far as they went, but to bound their scope. Everything he said was so rational; and yet, to an imaginative person, his conversation was unsatisfactory, and his philosophy somewhat chilling.

"I cannot say how pleased and surprised I am at your care of the fine old place," said he to Maltravers, as, leaning on his cane and his *ci-devant* pupil's arm, he loitered observantly through the grounds; "I see everywhere the presence of the Master."

And certainly the praise was deserved. The gardens were now in order, the dilapidated fences were repaired, the weeds no longer encumbered the walks. Nature was just assisted

and relieved by Art, without being oppressed by too officious a service from her handmaid. In the house itself some suitable and appropriate repairs and decorations—with such articles of furniture as combined modern comfort with the ancient and picturesque shapes of a former fashion—had redeemed the mansion from all appearance of dreariness and neglect; while still was left to its quaint halls and chambers the character which belonged to their architecture and associations. It was surprising how much a little exercise of simple taste had effected.

“I am glad you approve what I have done,” said Maltravers. “I know not how it was, but the desolation of the place when I returned to it reproached me. We contract friendship with places as with human beings, and fancy they have claims upon us; at least, that is my weakness.”

“And an amiable one it is, too, — I share it. As for me, I look upon Temple Grove as a fond husband upon a fair wife. I am always anxious to adorn it, and as proud of its beauty as if it could understand and thank me for my partial admiration. When I leave you I intend going to Paris, for the purpose of attending a sale of the pictures and effects of M. de ——. These auctions are to me what a jeweller’s shop is to a lover; but then, Ernest, I am an old bachelor.”

“And I, too, am an Arcadian,” said Maltravers, with a smile.

“Ah, but you are not too old for repentance. Burleigh now requires nothing but a mistress.”

“Perhaps it may soon receive that addition. I am yet undecided whether I shall sell it.”

“Sell it! sell Burleigh! — the last memorial of your mother’s ancestry! the classic retreat of the graceful Digbys! Sell Burleigh!”

“I had almost resolved to do so when I came hither; then I forswore the intention: now again I sometimes sorrowfully return to the idea.”

“And in Heaven’s name, why?”

“My old restlessness returns. Busy myself as I will here, I find the range of action monotonous and confined. I began

too soon to draw around me the large circumference of literature and action; and the small provincial sphere seems to me a sad going back in life. Perhaps I should not feel this, were my home less lonely; but as it is — no, the wanderer's ban is on me, and I again turn towards the lands of excitement and adventure."

"I understand this, Ernest; but why is your home so solitary? You are still at the age in which wise and congenial unions are the most frequently formed; your temper is domestic; your easy fortune and sobered ambition allow you to choose without reference to worldly considerations. Look round the world, and mix with the world again, and give Burleigh the mistress it requires."

Maltravers shook his head, and sighed.

"I do not say," continued Cleveland, wrapped in the glowing interest of the theme, "that you should marry a mere girl, but an amiable woman, who, like yourself, has seen something of life, and knows how to reckon on its cares, and to be contented with its enjoyments."

"You have said enough," said Maltravers, impatiently; "an experienced woman of the world, whose freshness of hope and heart is gone! What a picture! No, to me there is something inexpressibly beautiful in innocence and youth. But you say justly, — my years are not those that would make a union with youth desirable or well suited."

"I do *not* say that," said Cleveland, taking a pinch of snuff; "but you should avoid great disparity of age, — not for the sake of that disparity itself, but because with it is involved discord of temper, pursuits. A *very* young woman, new to the world, will not be contented with home alone; you are at once too gentle to curb her wishes, and a little too stern and reserved — pardon me for saying so — to be quite congenial to very early and sanguine youth."

"It is true," said Maltravers, with a tone of voice that showed he was struck with the remark; "but how have we fallen on this subject? let us change it. I have no idea of marriage, — the gloomy reminiscence of Florence Lascelles chains me to the past."

"Poor Florence, she might once have suited you; but now you are older, and would require a calmer and more malleable temper."

"Peace, I implore you!"

The conversation was changed; and at noon Mr. Merton, who had heard of Cleveland's arrival, called at Burleigh to renew an old acquaintance. He invited them to pass the evening at the rectory; and Cleveland, hearing that whist was a regular amusement, accepted the invitation for his host and himself. But when the evening came, Maltravers pleaded indisposition, and Cleveland was obliged to go alone.

When the old gentleman returned about midnight, he found Maltravers awaiting him in the library; and Cleveland, having won fourteen points, was in a very gay, conversable humour.

"You perverse hermit!" said he, "talk of solitude, indeed, with so pleasant a family a hundred yards distant! You deserve to be solitary, — I have no patience with you. They complain bitterly of your desertion, and say you were, at first, the *enfant de la maison*."

"So you like the Mertons? The clergyman is sensible, but commonplace."

"A very agreeable man, despite your cynical definition, and plays a very fair rubber. But Vargrave is a first-rate player."

"Vargrave is there still?"

"Yes, he breakfasts with us to-morrow, — he invited himself."

"Humph!"

"He played one rubber; the rest of the evening he devoted himself to the prettiest girl I ever saw, — Miss Cameron. What a sweet face! so modest, yet so intelligent! I talked with her a good deal during the deals in which I cut out. I almost lost my heart to her."

"So Lord Vargrave devoted himself to Miss Cameron?"

"To be sure, — you know they are to be married soon. Merton told me so. She is very rich. He is the luckiest fellow imaginable, that Vargrave! But he is much too old

for her: she seems to think so too. I can't explain why I think it; but by her pretty reserved manner I saw that she tried to keep the gay minister at a distance: but it would not do. Now, if you were ten years younger, or Miss Cameron ten years older, you might have had some chance of cutting out your old friend."

"So you think I also am too old for a lover?"

"For a lover of a girl of seventeen, certainly. You seem touchy on the score of age, Ernest."

"Not I;" and Maltravers laughed.

"No? There was a young gentleman present, who, I think, Vargrave might really find a dangerous rival, — a Colonel Legard, — one of the handsomest men I ever saw in my life; just the style to turn a romantic young lady's head; a mixture of the wild and the thoroughbred; black curls, superb eyes, and the softest manners in the world. But, to be sure, he has lived all his life in the best society. Not so his friend, Lord Doltimore, who has a little too much of the green-room lounge and French *café* manner for my taste."

"Doltimore, Legard, names new to me; I never met them at the rectory."

"Possibly they are staying at Admiral Legard's, in the neighbourhood. Miss Merton made their acquaintance at Knaresdean. A good old lady — the most perfect Mrs. Grundy one would wish to meet with — who owns the monosyllabic appellation of Hare (and who, being my partner, trumped my king!) assured me that Lord Doltimore was desperately in love with Caroline Merton. By the way, now, there is a young lady of a proper age for you, — handsome and clever, too."

"You talk of antidotes to matrimony; and so Miss Cameron —"

"Oh, no more of Miss Cameron now, or I shall sit up all night; she has half turned my head. I can't help pitying her, — married to one so careless and worldly as Lord Vargrave, thrown so young into the whirl of London. Poor thing! she had better have fallen in love with Legard, — which I dare say she will do, after all. Well, good-night!"

CHAPTER II.

PASSION, as frequently is seen,
Subsiding, settles into spleen ;
Hence, as the plague of happy life,
I ran away from party strife. — MATTHEW GREEN.

Here nymphs from hollow oaks relate
The dark decrees and will of fate. — *Ibid.*

ACCORDING to his engagement, Vargrave breakfasted the next morning at Burleigh. Maltravers at first struggled to return his familiar cordiality with equal graciousness. Condemning himself for former and unfounded suspicions, he wrestled against feelings which he could not or would not analyze, but which made Lumley an unwelcome visitor, and connected him with painful associations, whether of the present or the past. But there were points on which the penetration of Maltravers served to justify his prepossessions.

The conversation, chiefly sustained by Cleveland and Vargrave, fell on public questions; and as one was opposed to the other, Vargrave's exposition of views and motives had in them so much of the self-seeking of the professional placeman, that they might well have offended any man tinged by the lofty mania of political Quixotism. It was with a strange mixture of feelings that Maltravers listened: at one moment he proudly congratulated himself on having quitted a career where such opinions seemed so well to prosper: at another, his better and juster sentiments awoke the long-dormant combative faculty, and he almost longed for the turbulent but sublime arena, in which truths are vindicated and mankind advanced.

The interview did not serve for that renewal of intimacy which Vargrave appeared to seek, and Maltravers rejoiced when the placeman took his departure.

Lumley, who was about to pay a morning visit to Lord Doltimore, had borrowed Mr. Merton's stanhope, as being better adapted than any statelier vehicle to get rapidly through the cross-roads which led to Admiral Legard's house; and as he settled himself in the seat, with his servant by his side, he said laughingly, "I almost fancy myself naughty master Lumley again in this young-man-kind of two-wheeled cockle-boat: not dignified, but rapid, eh?"

And Lumley's face, as he spoke, had in it so much of frank gayety, and his manner was so simple, that Maltravers could with difficulty fancy him the same man who, five minutes before, had been uttering sentiments that might have become the oldest-hearted intriguer whom the hot-bed of ambition ever reared.

As soon as Lumley was gone, Maltravers left Cleveland alone to write letters (Cleveland was an exemplary and voluminous correspondent) and strolled with his dogs into the village. The effect which the presence of Maltravers produced among his peasantry was one that seldom failed to refresh and soothe his more bitter and disturbed thoughts. They had gradually (for the poor are quick-sighted) become sensible of his *justice*, — a finer quality than many that seem more amiable. They felt that his real object was to make them better and happier; and they had learned to see that the means he adopted generally advanced the end. Besides, if sometimes stern, he was never capricious or unreasonable; and then, too, he would listen patiently and advise kindly. They were a little in awe of him, but the awe only served to make them more industrious and orderly, — to stimulate the idle man, to reclaim the drunkard. He was one of the favourers of the small-allotment system, — not, indeed, as a panacea, but as one excellent stimulant to exertion and independence; and his chosen rewards for good conduct were in such comforts as served to awaken amongst those hitherto passive, dogged, and hopeless a desire to better and improve their condition. Somehow or other, without direct alms, the goodwife found that the little savings in the cracked teapot or the old stocking had greatly increased since the squire's

return, while her husband came home from his moderate cups at the alehouse more sober and in better temper. Having already saved something was a great reason why he should save more. The new school, too, was so much better conducted than the old one; the children actually liked going there; and now and then there were little village feasts connected with the schoolroom; play and work were joint associations.

And Maltravers looked into his cottages, and looked at the allotment-ground; and it was pleasant to him to say to himself, "I am not altogether without use in life." But as he pursued his lonely walk, and the glow of self-approval died away with the scenes that called it forth, the cloud again settled on his brow; and again he felt that in solitude the passions feed upon the heart. As he thus walked along the green lane, and the insect life of summer rustled audibly among the shadowy hedges and along the thick grass that sprang up on either side, he came suddenly upon a little group that arrested all his attention.

It was a woman, clad in rags, bleeding, and seemingly insensible, supported by the overseer of the parish and a labourer.

"What is the matter?" asked Maltravers.

"A poor woman has been knocked down and run over by a gentleman in a gig, your honour," replied the overseer. "He stopped, half an hour ago, at my house to tell me that she was lying on the road; and he has given me two sovereigns for her, your honour. But, poor cretur! she was too heavy for me to carry her, and I was forced to leave her and call Tom to help me."

"The gentleman might have stayed to see what were the consequences of his own act," muttered Maltravers, as he examined the wound in the temple, whence the blood flowed copiously.

"He said he was in a great hurry, your honour," said the village official, overhearing Maltravers. "I think it was one of the grand folks up at the parsonage; for I know it was Mr. Merton's bay horse, — he is a hot 'un!"

"Does the poor woman live in the neighbourhood? Do you know her?" asked Maltravers, turning from the contemplation of this new instance of Vargrave's selfishness of character.

"No; the old body seems quite a stranger here, — a trumper, or beggar, I think, sir. But it won't be a settlement if we take her in; and we can carry her to the Chequers, up the village, your honour."

"What is the nearest house, — your own?"

"Yes; but we be so busy now!"

"She shall not go to your house, and be neglected; and as for the public-house, it is too noisy: we must move her to the Hall."

"Your honour!" ejaculated the overseer, opening his eyes.

"It is not very far; she is severely hurt. Get a hurdle, lay a mattress on it. Make haste, both of you; I will wait here till you return."

The poor woman was carefully placed on the grass by the road-side, and Maltravers supported her head, while the men hastened to obey his orders.

CHAPTER III.

ALSE from that forked hill, the boasted seat
Of studious Peace and mild Philosophy,
Indignant murmurs mote be heard to threat. — WEST.

MR. CLEVELAND wanted to enrich one of his letters with a quotation from Ariosto, which he but imperfectly remembered. He had seen the book he wished to refer to in the little study the day before; and he quitted the library to search for it.

As he was tumbling over some volumes that lay piled on the writing-table, he felt a student's curiosity to discover what now constituted his host's favourite reading. He was surprised to observe that the greater portion of the works

that, by the doubled leaf and the pencilled reference, seemed most frequently consulted, were not of a literary nature, — they were chiefly scientific; and astronomy seemed the chosen science. He then remembered that he had heard Maltravers speaking to a builder, employed on the recent repairs, on the subject of an observatory. "This is very strange," thought Cleveland; "he gives up literature, the rewards of which are in his reach, and turns to science, at an age too late to discipline his mind to its austere training."

Alas! Cleveland did not understand that there are times in life when imaginative minds seek to numb and to blunt imagination. Still less did he feel that, when we perversely refuse to apply our active faculties to the catholic interests of the world, they turn morbidly into channels of research the least akin to their real genius. By the collision of minds alone does each mind discover what is its proper product: left to ourselves, our talents become but intellectual eccentricities.

Some scattered papers, in the handwriting of Maltravers, fell from one of the volumes. Of these, a few were but algebraical calculations, or short scientific suggestions, the value of which Mr. Cleveland's studies did not enable him to ascertain; but in others they were wild snatches of mournful and impassioned verse, which showed that the old vein of poetry still flowed, though no longer to the daylight. These verses Cleveland thought himself justified in glancing over; they seemed to portray a state of mind which deeply interested, and greatly saddened him. They expressed, indeed, a firm determination to bear up against both the memory and the fear of ill; but mysterious and hinted allusions here and there served to denote some recent and yet existent struggle, revealed by the heart only to the genius. In these partial and imperfect self-communings and confessions, there was the evidence of the pining affections, the wasted life, the desolate hearth of the lonely man. Yet so calm was Maltravers himself, even to his early friend, that Cleveland knew not what to think of the reality of the feelings painted. Had that fervid and romantic spirit been again awakened by a living

object? If so, where was the object found? The dates affixed to the verses were most recent. But whom had Maltravers seen? Cleveland's thoughts turned to Caroline Merton, to Evelyn; but when he had spoken of both, nothing in the countenance, the manner, of Maltravers had betrayed emotion. And once the heart of Maltravers had so readily betrayed itself! Cleveland knew not how pride, years, and suffering school the features, and repress the outward signs of what pass within. While thus engaged, the door of the study opened abruptly, and the servant announced Mr. Merton.

"A thousand pardons," said the courteous rector. "I fear we disturb you; but Admiral Legard and Lord Doltimore, who called on us this morning, were so anxious to see Burleigh, I thought I might take the liberty. We have come over quite in a large party, — taken the place by storm. Mr. Maltravers is out, I hear; but you will let us see the house. My allies are already in the hall, examining the armour."

Cleveland, ever sociable and urbane, answered suitably, and went with Mr. Merton into the hall, where Caroline, her little sisters, Evelyn, Lord Doltimore, Admiral Legard, and his nephew were assembled.

"Very proud to be my host's representative and your guide," said Cleveland. "Your visit, Lord Doltimore, is indeed an agreeable surprise. Lord Vargrave left us an hour or so since to call on you at Admiral Legard's: we buy our pleasure with his disappointment."

"It is very unfortunate," said the admiral, a bluff, harsh-looking old gentleman; "but we were not aware, till we saw Mr. Merton, of the honour Lord Vargrave has done us. I can't think how we missed him on the road."

"My dear uncle," said Colonel Legard, in a peculiarly sweet and agreeable tone of voice, "you forget we came three miles round by the high road; and Mr. Merton says that Lord Vargrave took the short cut by Langley End. My uncle, Mr. Cleveland, never feels in safety upon land, unless the road is as wide as the British Channel, and the horses go before the wind at the rapid pace of two knots and a half an hour!"

"I just wish I had you at sea, Mr. Jackanapes," said the admiral, looking grimly at his handsome nephew, while he shook his cane at him.

The nephew smiled; and, falling back, conversed with Evelyn.

The party were now shown over the house; and Lord Doltimore was loud in its praises. It was like a château he had once hired in Normandy, — it had a French character; those old chairs were in excellent taste, — quite the style of Francis the First.

"I know no man I respect more than Mr. Maltravers," quoth the admiral. "Since he has been amongst us this time, he has been a pattern to us country gentlemen. He would make an excellent colleague for Sir John. We really must get him to stand against that young puppy who is member of the House of Commons only because his father is a peer, and never votes more than twice a session."

Mr. Merton looked grave.

"I wish to Heaven you could persuade him to stay amongst you," said Cleveland. "He has half taken it into his head to part with Burleigh!"

"Part with Burleigh!" exclaimed Evelyn, turning abruptly from the handsome colonel, in whose conversation she had hitherto seemed absorbed.

"My very ejaculation when I heard him say so, my dear young lady."

"I wish he would," said Lord Doltimore hastily, and glancing towards Caroline. "I should much like to buy it. What do you think would be the purchase-money?"

"Don't talk so cold-bloodedly," said the admiral, letting the point of his cane fall with great emphasis on the floor. "I can't bear to see old families deserting their old places, — quite wicked. You buy Burleigh! have not you got a country-seat of your own, my lord? Go and live there, and take Mr. Maltravers for your model, — you could not have a better."

Lord Doltimore sneered, coloured, settled his neckcloth, and turning round to Colonel Legard, whispered, "Legard, your good uncle is a bore."

Legard looked a little offended, and made no reply.

"But," said Caroline, coming to the relief of her admirer, "if Mr. Maltravers will sell the place, surely he could not have a better successor."

"He sha'n't sell the place, ma'am, and that's poz!" cried the admiral. "The whole county shall sign a round-robin to tell him it's a shame; and if any one dares to buy it we'll send him to Coventry."

Miss Merton laughed, but looked round the old wainscot walls with unusual interest; she thought it would be a fine thing to be Lady of Burleigh!

"And what is that picture so carefully covered up?" said the admiral, as they now stood in the library.

"The late Mrs. Maltravers, Ernest's mother," replied Cleveland, slowly. "He dislikes it to be shown—to strangers: the other is a Digby."

Evelyn looked towards the veiled portrait, and thought of her first interview with Maltravers; but the soft voice of Colonel Legard murmured in her ear, and her reverie was broken.

Cleveland eyed the colonel, and muttered to himself, "Var-grave should keep a sharp look-out."

They had now finished their round of the show-apartments—which indeed had little but their antiquity and old portraits to recommend them—and were in a lobby at the back of the house, communicating with a courtyard, two sides of which were occupied with the stables. The sight of the stables reminded Caroline of the Arab horses; and at the word "horses" Lord Doltimore seized Legard's arm and carried him off to inspect the animals. Caroline, her father, and the admiral followed. Mr. Cleveland happened not to have on his walking-shoes; and the flagstones in the courtyard looked damp; and Mr. Cleveland, like most old bachelors, was prudently afraid of cold; so he excused himself, and stayed behind. He was talking to Evelyn about the Digbys, and full of anecdotes about Sir Kenelm at the moment the rest departed so abruptly; and Evelyn was interested, so she insisted on keeping him company.

The old gentleman was flattered; he thought it excellent breeding in Miss Cameron. The children ran out to renew acquaintance with the peacock, who, perched on an old stirrup-stone, was sunning his gay plumage in the noon-day.

"It is astonishing," said Cleveland, "how certain family features are transmitted from generation to generation! Maltravers has still the forehead and eyebrows of the Digbys, — that peculiar, brooding, thoughtful forehead, which you observed in the picture of Sir Kenelm. Once, too, he had much the same dreaming character of mind, but he has lost that, in some measure at least. He has fine qualities, Miss Cameron, — I have known him since he was born. I trust his career is not yet closed; could he but form ties that would bind him to England, I should indulge in higher expectations than I did even when the wild boy turned half the heads in Göttingen.

"But we were talking of family portraits: there is one in the entrance-hall, which perhaps you have not observed; it is half obliterated by damp and time, yet it is of a remarkable personage, connected with Maltravers by ancestral intermarriages, — Lord Falkland, the Falkland of Clarendon; a man weak in character, but made most interesting by history, — utterly unfitted for the severe ordeal of those stormy times; sighing for peace when his whole soul should have been in war; and repentant alike whether with the Parliament or the king, but still a personage of elegant and endearing associations; a student-soldier, with a high heart and a gallant spirit. Come and look at his features, — homely and worn, but with a characteristic air of refinement and melancholy thought."

Thus running on, the agreeable old gentleman drew Evelyn into the outer hall. Upon arriving there, through a small passage, which opened upon the hall, they were surprised to find the old housekeeper and another female servant standing by a rude kind of couch on which lay the form of the poor woman described in the last chapter. Maltravers and two other men were also there; and Maltravers himself was giving orders to his servants, while he leaned over the sufferer, who was now conscious both of pain and the service rendered to her. As Evelyn stopped abruptly, and in surprise, oppo-

site and almost at the foot of the homely litter, the woman raised herself up on one arm, and gazed at her with a wild stare; then, muttering some incoherent words which appeared to betoken delirium, she sank back, and was again insensible.

CHAPTER IV.

HENCE oft to win some stubborn maid,

Still does the wanton god assume

The martial air, the gay cockade,

The sword, the shoulder-knot, and plume.

MARRIOTT.

THE hall was cleared, the sufferer had been removed, and Maltravers was left alone with Cleveland and Evelyn.

He simply and shortly narrated the adventure of the morning; but he did not mention that Vargrave had been the cause of the injury his new guest had sustained. Now this event had served to make a mutual and kindred impression on Evelyn and Maltravers. The humanity of the latter, natural and commonplace as it was, was an endearing recollection to Evelyn, precisely as it showed that his cold theory of disdain towards the mass did not affect his actual conduct towards individuals. On the other hand, Maltravers had perhaps been yet more impressed with the prompt and ingenious sympathy which Evelyn had testified towards the sufferer: it had so evidently been her first gracious and womanly impulse to hasten to the side of this humble stranger. In that impulse, Maltravers himself had been almost forgotten; and as the poor woman lay pale and lifeless, and the young Evelyn bent over her in beautiful compassion, Maltravers thought she had never seemed so lovely, so irresistible, — in fact, pity in woman is a great beautifier.

As Maltravers finished his short tale, Evelyn's eyes were fixed upon him with such frank and yet such soft approval,

that the look went straight to his heart. He quickly turned away, and abruptly changed the conversation.

"But how long have you been here, Miss Cameron, — and your companions?"

"We are again intruders; but this time it was not my fault."

"No," said Cleveland, "for a wonder it was male, and not lady-like curiosity that trespassed on Bluebeard's chamber. But, however, to soften your resentment, know that Miss Cameron has brought you a purchaser for Burleigh. Now, then, we can test the sincerity of your wish to part with it. I assure you, meanwhile, that Miss Cameron was as much shocked at the idea as I was. Were you not?"

"But you surely have no intention of selling Burleigh?" said Evelyn, anxiously.

"I fear I do not know my own mind."

"Well," said Cleveland, "here comes your tempter. Lord Doltimore, let me introduce Mr. Maltravers."

Lord Doltimore bowed.

"Been admiring your horses, Mr. Maltravers. I never saw anything so perfect as the black one; may I ask where you bought him?"

"It was a present to me," answered Maltravers.

"A present?"

"Yes, from one who would not have sold that horse for a king's ransom, — an old Arab chief, with whom I formed a kind of friendship in the desert. A wound disabled him from riding, and he bestowed the horse on me, with as much solemn tenderness for the gift as if he had given me his daughter in marriage."

"I think of travelling in the East," said Lord Doltimore, with much gravity: "I suppose nothing will induce you to sell the black horse?"

"Lord Doltimore!" said Maltravers, in a tone of lofty surprise.

"I do not care for the price," continued the young nobleman, a little disconcerted.

"No; I never sell any horse that has once learned to know

me. I would as soon think of selling a friend. In the desert, one's horse is one's friend. I am almost an Arab myself in these matters."

"But talking of sale and barter reminds me of Burleigh," said Cleveland, maliciously. "Lord Doltimore is a universal buyer. He covets all your goods: he will take the house, if he can't have the stables."

"I only mean," said Lord Doltimore, rather peevishly, "that if you wish to part with Burleigh, I should like to have the option of purchase."

"I will remember it, if I determine to sell the place," answered Maltravers, smiling gravely; "at present I am undecided."

He turned away towards Evelyn as he spoke, and almost started to observe that she was joined by a stranger, whose approach he had not before noticed, — and that stranger a man of such remarkable personal advantages, that, had Maltravers been in Vargrave's position, he might reasonably have experienced a pang of jealous apprehension. Slightly above the common height; slender, yet strongly formed; set off by every advantage of dress, of air, of the nameless tone and pervading refinement that sometimes, though not always, springs from early and habitual intercourse with the most polished female society, — Colonel Legard, at the age of eight and twenty, had acquired a reputation for beauty almost as popular and as well known as that which men usually acquire by mental qualifications. Yet there was nothing effeminate in his countenance, the symmetrical features of which were made masculine and expressive by the rich olive of the complexion, and the close jetty curls of the Antinous-like hair.

They seemed, — as they there stood — Evelyn and Legard — so well suited to each other in personal advantages, their different styles so happily contrasted; and Legard, at the moment, was regarding her with such respectful admiration, and whispering compliment to her in so subdued a tone, that the dullest observer might have ventured a prophecy by no means agreeable to the hopes of Lumley Lord Vargrave.

But a feeling or fear of this nature was not that which

occurred to Maltravers, or dictated his startled exclamation of surprise.

Legard looked up as he heard the exclamation, and saw Maltravers, whose back had hitherto been turned towards him. He, too, was evidently surprised, and seemingly confused; the colour mounted to his cheek, and then left it pale.

"Colonel Legard," said Cleveland, "a thousand apologies for my neglect: I really did not observe you enter, — you came round by the front door, I suppose. Let me make you acquainted with Mr. Maltravers."

Legard bowed low.

"We have met before," said he, in embarrassed accents: "at Venice, I think!"

Maltravers inclined his head rather stiffly at first, but then, as if moved by a second impulse, held out his hand cordially.

"Oh, Mr. Ernest, here you are!" cried Sophy, bounding into the hall, followed by Mr. Merton, the old admiral, Caroline, and Cecilia.

The interruption seemed welcome and opportune. The admiral, with blunt cordiality, expressed his pleasure at being made known to Mr. Maltravers.

The conversation grew general; refreshments were proffered and declined; the visit drew to its close.

It so happened that as the guests departed, Evelyn, from whose side the constant colonel had insensibly melted away, lingered last, — save, indeed, the admiral, who was discussing with Cleveland a new specific for the gout. And as Maltravers stood on the steps, Evelyn turned to him with all her beautiful *naïveté* of mingled timidity and kindness, and said, —

"And are we really never to see you again; never to hear again your tales of Egypt and Arabia; never to talk over Tasso and Dante? No books, no talk, no disputes, no quarrels? What have we done? I thought we had made it up, — and yet you are still unforgiving. Give me a good scold, and be friends!"

"Friends! you have no friend more anxious, more devoted than I am. Young, rich, fascinating as you are, you will

carve no impression on human hearts deeper than that you have graven here!"

Carried away by the charm of her childlike familiarity and enchanting sweetness, Maltravers had said more than he intended; yet his eyes, his emotion, said more than his words.

Evelyn coloured deeply, and her whole manner changed. However, she turned away, and saying, with a forced gayety, "Well, then, you will not desert us; we shall see you once more?" hurried down the steps to join her companions.

CHAPTER V.

SEE how the skilful lover spreads his toils. — STILLINGFLEET.

THE party had not long returned to the rectory, and the admiral's carriage was ordered, when Lord Vargrave made his appearance. He descanted with gay good-humour on his long drive, the bad roads, and his disappointment at the *contretemps* that awaited him; then, drawing aside Colonel Legard, who seemed unusually silent and abstracted, he said to him, —

"My dear colonel, my visit this morning was rather to you than to Doltimore. I confess that I should like to see your abilities enlisted on the side of the Government; and knowing that the post of Storekeeper to the Ordnance will be vacant in a day or two by the promotion of Mr. —, I wrote to secure the refusal. To-day's post brings me the answer. I offer the place to you; and I trust, before long, to procure you also a seat in parliament. But you must start for London immediately."

A week ago, and Legard's utmost ambition would have been amply gratified by this post; he now hesitated.

"My dear lord," said he, "I cannot say how grateful I feel for your kindness; but — but —"

"Enough; no thanks, my dear Legard. Can you go to town to-morrow?"

"Indeed," said Legard, "I fear not; I must consult my uncle."

"I can answer for him; I sounded him before I wrote. Reflect! You are not rich, my dear Legard; it is an excellent opening: a seat in parliament, too! Why, what *can* be your reason for hesitation?"

There was something meaning and inquisitive in the tone of voice in which this question was put that brought the colour to the colonel's cheek. He knew not well what to reply; and he began, too, to think that he ought not to refuse the appointment. Nay, would his uncle, on whom he was dependent, consent to such a refusal? Lord Vargrave saw the irresolution, and proceeded. He spent ten minutes in combating every scruple, every objection: he placed all the advantages of the post, real or imaginary, in every conceivable point of view before the colonel's eyes; he sought to flatter, to wheedle, to coax, to weary him into accepting it; and he at length partially succeeded. The colonel petitioned for three days' consideration, which Vargrave reluctantly acceded to; and Legard then stepped into his uncle's carriage, with the air rather of a martyr than a maiden placeman.

"Aha!" said Vargrave, chuckling to himself as he took a turn in the grounds, "I have got rid of that handsome knave; and now I shall have Evelyn all to myself!"

CHAPTER VI.

I AM forfeited to eternal disgrace if you do not commiserate

Go to, then, raise, recover. — BEN JONSON : *Poetaster*.

THE next morning Admiral Legard and his nephew were conversing in the little cabin consecrated by the name of the admiral's "own room."

"Yes," said the veteran, "it would be moonshine and madness not to accept Vargrave's offer; though one can see through such a millstone as that with half an eye. His lordship is jealous of such a fine, handsome young fellow as you are, — and very justly. But as long as he is under the same roof with Miss Cameron, you will have no opportunity to pay your court; when he goes, you can always manage to be in her neighbourhood; and then, you know — puppy that you are — her business will be very soon settled." And the admiral eyed the handsome colonel with grim fondness.

Legard sighed.

"Have you any commands at ——?" said he; "I am just going to canter over there before Doltimore is up."

"Sad lazy dog, your friend."

"I shall be back by twelve."

"What are you going to —— for?"

"Brookes, the farrier, has a little spaniel, — King Charles's breed. Miss Cameron is fond of dogs. I can send it to her, with my compliments, — it will be a sort of leave-taking."

"Sly rogue; ha, ha, ha! d—d sly; ha, ha!" and the admiral punched the slender waist of his nephew, and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Good-by, sir."

"Stop, George; I forgot to ask you a question; you never told me you knew Mr. Maltravers. Why don't you cultivate his acquaintance?"

"We met at Venice accidentally. I did not know his name then; he left just as I arrived. As you say, I ought to cultivate his acquaintance."

"Fine character!"

"Very!" said Legard, with energy, as he abruptly quitted the room.

George Legard was an orphan. His father — the admiral's elder brother — had been a spendthrift man of fashion, with a tolerably large unentailed estate. He married a duke's daughter without a sixpence. Estates are troublesome, — Mr. Legard's was sold. On the purchase-money the happy pair lived for some years in great comfort, when Mr. Legard

died of a brain fever; and his disconsolate widow found herself alone in the world with a beautiful little curly-headed boy, and an annuity of one thousand a year, for which her settlement had been exchanged. All the rest of the fortune was gone, — a discovery not made till Mr. Legard's death. Lady Louisa did not long survive the loss of her husband and her station in society; her income of course died with herself. Her only child was brought up in the house of his grandfather, the duke, till he was of age to hold the office of king's page; thence, as is customary, he was promoted to a commission in the Guards. To the munificent emoluments of his pay, the ducal family liberally added an allowance of two hundred a year; upon which income Cornet Legard contrived to get very handsomely in debt. The extraordinary beauty of his person, his connections, and his manners obtained him all the celebrity that fashion can bestow; but poverty is a bad thing. Luckily, at this time, his uncle the admiral returned from sea, to settle for the rest of his life in England.

Hitherto, the admiral had taken no notice of George. He himself had married a merchant's daughter with a fair portion; and had been blessed with two children, who monopolized all his affection. But there seemed some mortality in the Legard family; in one year after returning to England and settling in B——shire, the admiral found himself wifeless and childless. He then turned to his orphan nephew; and soon became fonder of him than he had ever been of his own children. The admiral, though in easy circumstances, was not wealthy; nevertheless, he advanced the money requisite for George's rise in the army, and doubled the allowance bestowed by the duke. His grace heard of this generosity, and discovered that he himself had a very large family growing up; that the marquess was going to be married, and required an increase of income; that he had already behaved most handsomely to his nephew; and the result of this discovery was that the duke withdrew the two hundred a year. Legard, however, who looked on his uncle as an exhaustless mine, went on breaking hearts and making debts — till one

morning he woke in the Bench. The admiral was hastily summoned to London. He arrived; paid off the duns—a kindness which seriously embarrassed him—swore, scolded, and cried; and finally insisted that Legard should give up that d—d coxcomb regiment, in which he was now captain, retire on half-pay, and learn economy and a change of habits on the Continent.

The admiral, a rough but good-natured man on the whole, had two or three little peculiarities. In the first place, he piqued himself on a sort of John Bull independence; was a bit of a Radical (a strange anomaly in an admiral)—which was owing, perhaps, to two or three young lords having been put over his head in the earlier part of his career; and he made it a point with his nephew (of whose affection he was jealous) to break with those fine grand connections, who plunged him into a sea of extravagance, and then never threw him a rope to save him from drowning.

In the second place, without being stingy, the admiral had a good deal of economy in his disposition. He was not a man to allow his nephew to ruin him. He had an extraordinarily old-fashioned horror of gambling,—a polite habit of George's; and he declared positively that his nephew must, while a bachelor, learn to live upon seven hundred a year. Thirdly, the admiral could be a very stern, stubborn, passionate old brute; and when he coolly told George, "Harkye, you young puppy, if you get into debt again—if you exceed the very handsome allowance I make you—I shall just cut you off with a shilling," George was fully aware that his uncle was one who would rigidly keep his word.

However, it was something to be out of debt, and one of the handsomest men of his age; and George Legard, whose rank in the Guards made him a colonel in the line, left England tolerably contented with the state of affairs.

Despite the foibles of his youth, George Legard had many high and generous qualities. Society had done its best to spoil a fine and candid disposition, with abilities far above mediocrity; but society had only partially succeeded. Still, unhappily, dissipation had grown a habit with him, all his

talents were of a nature that brought a ready return. At his age, it was but natural that the praise of *salons* should retain all its sweetness.

In addition to those qualities which please the softer sex, Legard was a good whist player, superb at billiards, famous as a shot, unrivalled as a horseman, — in fact, an accomplished man, “who did everything so devilish well!” These accomplishments did not stand him in much stead in Italy; and, though with reluctance and remorse, he took again to gambling, — he really *had* nothing else to do.

In Venice there was, one year, established a society somewhat on the principle of the *salon* at Paris. Some rich Venetians belonged to it; but it was chiefly for the convenience of foreigners, — French, English, and Austrians. Here there was select gaming in one room, while another apartment served the purposes of a club. Many who never played belonged to this society; but still they were not the *habitués*.

Legard played: he won at first, then he lost, then he won again; it was a pleasant excitement. One night, after winning largely at *roulette*, he sat down to play *écarté* with a Frenchman of high rank. Legard played well at this, as at all scientific games; he thought he should make a fortune out of the Frenchman. The game excited much interest; the crowd gathered round the table; bets ran high; the vanity of Legard, as well as his interest, was implicated in the conflict. It was soon evident that the Frenchman played as well as the Englishman. The stakes, at first tolerably high, were doubled. Legard betted freely. Cards went against him; he lost much, lost all that he had, lost more than he had, lost several hundreds, which he promised to pay the next morning. The table was broken up, the spectators separated. Amongst the latter had been one Englishman, introduced into the club for the first time that night. He had neither played nor betted, but had observed the game with a quiet and watchful interest. This Englishman lodged at the same hotel as Legard. He was at Venice only for a day; the promised sight of a file of English newspapers had drawn him to the club; the general excitement around had attracted him

to the table; and once there, the spectacle of human emotions exercised its customary charm.

On ascending the stairs that conducted to his apartment, the Englishman heard a deep groan in a room the door of which was ajar. He paused, the sound was repeated; he gently pushed open the door and saw Legard seated by a table, while a glass on the opposite wall reflected his working and convulsed countenance, with his hands trembling visibly, as they took a brace of pistols from the case.

The Englishman recognized the loser at the club; and at once divined the act that his madness or his despair dictated. Legard twice took up one of the pistols, and twice laid it down irresolute; the third time he rose with a start, raised the weapon to his head, and the next moment it was wrenched from his grasp.

"Sit down, sir!" said the stranger, in a loud and commanding voice.

Legard, astonished and abashed, sank once more into his seat, and stared sullenly and half-unconsciously at his countryman.

"You have lost your money," said the Englishman, after calmly replacing the pistols in their case, which he locked, putting the key into his pocket; "and that is misfortune enough for one night. If you had won, and ruined your opponent, you would be excessively happy, and go to bed, thinking Good Luck (which is the representative of Providence) watched over you. For my part, I think you ought to be very thankful that you are not the winner."

"Sir," said Legard, recovering from his surprise, and beginning to feel resentment, "I do not understand this intrusion in my apartments. You have saved me, it is true, from death, — but life is a worse curse."

"Young man, no! moments in life are agony, but life itself is a blessing. Life is a mystery that defies all calculation. You can never say, 'To-day is wretched, therefore to-morrow must be the same!' And for the loss of a little gold you, in the full vigour of youth, with all the future before you, will dare to rush into the chances of eternity! You, who have

never, perhaps, thought what eternity is! Yet," added the stranger, in a soft and melancholy voice, "you are young and beautiful, — perhaps the pride and hope of others! Have you no tie, no affection, no kindred; are you lord of yourself?"

Legard was moved by the tone of the stranger, as well as by the words.

"It is not the loss of money," said he, gloomily, — "it is the loss of honour. To-morrow I must go forth a shunned and despised man, — I, a gentleman and a soldier! They may insult me — and I have no reply!"

The Englishman seemed to muse, for his brow lowered, and he made no answer. Legard threw himself back, overcome with his own excitement, and wept like a child. The stranger, who imagined himself above the indulgence of emotion (vain man!), woke from his revery at this burst of passion. He gazed at first (I grieve to write) with a curl of the haughty lip that had in it contempt; but it passed quickly away; and the hard man remembered that he too had been young and weak, and his own errors greater perhaps than those of the one he had ventured to despise. He walked to and fro the room, still without speaking. At last he approached the gamester, and took his hand.

"What is your debt?" he asked gently.

"What matters it? — more than I can pay."

"If life is a trust, so is wealth: *you* have the first in charge for others, *I* may have the last. What is the debt?"

Legard started; it was a strong struggle between shame and hope. "If I could borrow it, I could repay it hereafter, — I know I could; I would not think of it otherwise."

"Very well, so be it, — I will lend you the money on one condition. Solemnly promise me, on your faith as a soldier and a gentleman, that you will not, for ten years to come — even if you grow rich, and can ruin others — touch card or dice-box. Promise me that you will shun all gaming for gain, under whatever disguise, whatever appellation. I will take your word as my bond."

Legard, overjoyed, and scarcely trusting his senses, gave the promise.

"Sleep then, to-night, in hope and assurance of the morrow," said the Englishman: "let this event be an omen to you, that while there is a future there is no despair. One word more, — I do not want your thanks! it is easy to be generous at the expense of justice. Perhaps I have been so now. This sum, which is to save your life — a life you so little value — might have blessed fifty human beings, — better men than either the giver or receiver. What is given to error may perhaps be a wrong to virtue. When you would ask others to support a career of blind and selfish extravagance, pause and think over the breadless lips this wasted gold would have fed! the joyless hearts it would have comforted! You talk of repaying me: if the occasion offer, do so; if not — if we never meet again, and you have it in your power, pay it for me to the Poor! And now, farewell."

"Stay, — give me the name of my preserver! Mine is —"

"Hush! what matter names? This is a sacrifice we have both made to honour. You will sooner recover your self-esteem (and without self-esteem there is neither faith nor honour), when you think that your family, your connections, are spared all association with your own error; that I may hear them spoken of, that I may mix with them without fancying that they owe me gratitude."

"Your own name then?" said Legard, deeply penetrated with the delicate generosity of his benefactor.

"Tush!" muttered the stranger impatiently as he closed the door.

The next morning when he awoke Legard saw upon the table a small packet; it contained a sum that exceeded the debt named.

On the envelope was written, "Remember the bond."

The stranger had already quitted Venice. He had not travelled through the Italian cities under his own name, for he had just returned from the solitudes of the East, and was not yet hardened to the publicity of the gossip which in towns haunted by his countrymen attended a well-known name; that given to Legard by the innkeeper, mutilated by Italian pronunciation, the young man had never heard before, and soon

forgot. He paid his debts, and he scrupulously kept his word. The adventure of that night went far, indeed, to reform and ennoble the mind and habits of George Legard. Time passed, and he never met his benefactor, till in the halls of Burleigh he recognized the stranger in Maltravers.

CHAPTER VII.

WHY value, then, that strength of mind they boast,
As often varying, and as often lost ?

HAWKINS BROWNE (*translated by* SOAME JENYNS).

MALTRAVERS was lying at length, with his dogs around him, under a beech-tree that threw its arms over one of the calm still pieces of water that relieved the groves of Burleigh, when Colonel Legard spied him from the bridle-road which led through the park to the house. The colonel dismounted, threw the rein over his arm; and at the sound of the hoofs Maltravers turned, saw the visitor, and rose. He held out his hand to Legard, and immediately began talking of indifferent matters.

Legard was embarrassed; but his nature was not one to profit by the silence of a benefactor. "Mr. Maltravers," said he, with graceful emotion, "though you have not yet allowed me an opportunity to allude to it, do not think I am ungrateful for the service you rendered me."

Maltravers looked grave, but made no reply. Legard resumed, with a heightened colour, —

"I cannot say how I regret that it is not yet in my power to discharge my debt; but —"

"When it is, you will do so. Pray think no more of it. Are you going to the rectory?"

"No, not this morning; in fact, I leave B——shire to-morrow. Pleasant family, the Mertons."

"And Miss Cameron —"

"Is certainly beautiful, — and very rich. How could she ever think of marrying Lord Vargrave, so much older, — she who could have so many admirers?"

"Not, surely, while betrothed to another?"

This was a refinement which Legard, though an honourable man as men go, did not quite understand. "Oh," said he, "that was by some eccentric old relation, — her father-in-law, I think. Do you think she is bound by such an engagement?"

Maltravers made no reply, but amused himself by throwing a stick into the water, and sending one of his dogs after it.

Legard looked on, and his affectionate disposition yearned to make advances which something distant in the manner of Maltravers chilled and repelled.

When Legard was gone, Maltravers followed him with his eyes. "And this is the man whom Cleveland thinks Evelyn could love! I could forgive her marrying Vargrave. Independently of the conscientious feeling that may belong to the engagement, Vargrave has wit, talent, intellect; and this man has nothing but the skin of the panther. Was I wrong to save him? No. Every human life, I suppose, has its uses. But Evelyn — I could despise her if her heart was the fool of the eye!"

These comments were most unjust to Legard; but they were just of that kind of injustice which the man of talent often commits against the man of external advantages, and which the latter still more often retaliates on the man of talent. As Maltravers thus soliloquized, he was accosted by Mr. Cleveland.

"Come, Ernest, you must not cut these unfortunate Mertons any longer. If you continue to do so, do you know what Mrs. Hare and the world will say?"

"No — what?"

"That you have been refused by Miss Merton."

"That *would* be a calumny!" said Ernest, smiling.

"Or that you are hopelessly in love with Miss Cameron."

Maltravers started; his proud heart swelled; he pulled his hat over his brows, and said, after a short pause, —

"Well, Mrs. Hare and the world must not have it all their own way; and so, whenever you go to the rectory, take me with you."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE more he strove
To advance his suit, the farther from her love.

DRYDEN: *Theodore and Honoria.*

THE line of conduct which Vargrave now adopted with regard to Evelyn was craftily conceived and carefully pursued. He did not hazard a single syllable which might draw on him a rejection of his claims; but at the same time no lover could be more constant, more devoted, in attentions. In the presence of others, there was an air of familiar intimacy that seemed to arrogate a right, which to her he scrupulously shunned to assert. Nothing could be more respectful, nay, more timid, than his language, or more calmly confident than his manner. Not having much vanity, nor any very acute self-conceit, he did not delude himself into the idea of winning Evelyn's affections; he rather sought to entangle her judgment, to weave around her web upon web, — not the less dangerous for being invisible. He took the compact as a matter of course, as something not to be broken by any possible chance; her hand was to be his as a right: it was her heart that he so anxiously sought to gain. But this distinction was so delicately drawn, and insisted upon so little in any tangible form, that, whatever Evelyn's wishes for an understanding, a much more experienced woman would have been at a loss to ripen one.

Evelyn longed to confide in Caroline, to consult her; but Caroline, though still kind, had grown distant. "I wish," said Evelyn, one night as she sat in Caroline's dressing-room, — "I wish that I knew what tone to take with Lord Vargrave.

I feel more and more convinced that a union between us is impossible; and yet, precisely because he does not press it, am I unable to tell him so. I wish you could undertake that task; you seem such friends with him."

"I!" said Caroline, changing countenance.

"Yes, you! Nay, do not blush, or I shall think you envy me. Could you not save us both from the pain that otherwise must come sooner or later?"

"Lord Vargrave would not thank me for such an act of friendship. Besides, Evelyn, consider, — it is scarcely possible to break off this engagement *now*."

"*Now!* and why now?" said Evelyn, astonished.

"The world believes it so implicitly. Observe, whoever sits next you rises if Lord Vargrave approaches; the neighbourhood talk of nothing else but your marriage; and your fate, Evelyn, is not pitied."

"I will leave this place! I will go back to the cottage! I cannot bear this!" said Evelyn, passionately wringing her hands.

"You do not love another, I am sure: not young Mr. Hare, with his green coat and straw-coloured whiskers; or Sir Henry Foxglove, with his how-d'ye-do like a view-halloo; perhaps, indeed, Colonel Legard, — he is handsome. What! do you blush at his name? No; you say 'not Legard:' who else is there?"

"You are cruel; you trifle with me!" said Evelyn, in tearful reproach; and she rose to go to her own room.

"My dear girl!" said Caroline, touched by her evident pain; "learn from me — if I may say so — that marriages are *not* made in heaven! Yours will be as fortunate as earth can bestow. A love-match is usually the least happy of all. Our foolish sex demand so much in love; and love, after all, is but one blessing among many. Wealth and rank remain when love is but a heap of ashes. For my part, I have chosen my destiny and my husband."

"Your husband!"

"Yes, you see him in Lord Doltimore. I dare say we shall be as happy as any amorous Corydon and Phyllis." But there

was irony in Caroline's voice as she spoke; and she sighed heavily. Evelyn did not believe her serious; and the friends parted for the night.

"Mine is a strange fate!" said Caroline to herself; "I am asked by the man whom I love, and who professes to love me, to bestow myself on another, and to plead for him to a younger and fairer bride. Well, I will obey him in the first; the last is a bitterer task, and I cannot perform it earnestly. Yet Vargrave has a strange power over me; and when I look round the world, I see that he is right. In these most commonplace artifices, there is yet a wild majesty that charms and fascinates me. It is something to rule the world: and his and mine are natures formed to do so."

CHAPTER IX.

A SMOKE raised with the fume of sighs.

Romeo and Juliet.

IT is certain that Evelyn experienced for Maltravers sentiments which, if not love, might easily be mistaken for it. But whether it were that master-passion, or merely its fanciful resemblance, — love in early youth and innocent natures, if of sudden growth, is long before it makes itself apparent. Evelyn had been prepared to feel an interest in her solitary neighbour. His mind, as developed in his works, had half formed her own. Her childish adventure with the stranger had never been forgotten. Her present knowledge of Maltravers was an union of dangerous and often opposite associations, — the Ideal and the Real.

Love, in its first dim and imperfect shape, is but imagination concentrated on one object. It is a genius of the heart, resembling that of the intellect; it appeals to, it stirs up, it evokes, the sentiments and sympathies that lie most latent in our nature. Its sigh is the spirit that moves over the ocean, and arouses the Anadyomene into life. Therefore is it that

MIND produces affections deeper than those of external form; therefore it is that women are worshippers of glory, which is the palpable and visible representative of a genius whose operations they cannot always comprehend. Genius has so much in common with love, the imagination that animates one is so much the property of the other, that there is not a surer sign of the existence of genius than the love that it creates and bequeaths. It penetrates deeper than the reason, it binds a nobler captive than the fancy. As the sun upon the dial, it gives to the human heart both its shadow and its light. Nations are its worshippers and wooers; and Posterity learns from its oracles to dream, to aspire, to adore!

Had Maltravers declared the passion that consumed him, it is probable that it would soon have kindled a return. But his frequent absence, his sustained distance of manner, had served to repress the feelings that in a young and virgin heart rarely flow with much force until they are invited and aroused. *Le besoin d'aimer* in girls, is, perhaps, in itself powerful; but is fed by another want, *le besoin d'être aimé!* If, therefore, Evelyn at present felt love for Maltravers, the love had certainly not passed into the core of life: the tree had not so far struck its roots but what it might have borne transplanting. There was in her enough of the pride of sex to have recoiled from the thought of giving love to one who had not asked the treasure. Capable of attachment, more trustful and therefore, if less vehement, more beautiful and durable than that which had animated the brief tragedy of Florence Lascelles, she could not have been the unknown correspondent, or revealed the soul, because the features wore a mask.

It must also be allowed that, in some respects, Evelyn was too young and inexperienced thoroughly to appreciate all that was most truly lovable and attractive in Maltravers. At four and twenty she would, perhaps, have felt no fear mingled with her respect for him; but seventeen and six and thirty is a wide interval! She never felt that there was that difference in years until she had met Legard, and then at once she comprehended it. With Legard she had moved on equal terms; he was not too wise, too high for her every-day thoughts. He

less excited her imagination, less attracted her reverence. But, somehow or other, that voice which proclaimed her power, those eyes which never turned from hers, went nearer to her heart. As Evelyn had once said to Caroline, "It was a great enigma!" — her own feelings were a mystery to her; and she reclined by the "Golden Waterfalls" without tracing her likeness in the glass of the pool below.

Maltravers appeared again at the rectory. He joined their parties by day, and his evenings were spent with them as of old. In this I know not precisely what were his motives — perhaps he did not know them himself. It might be that his pride was roused; it might be that he could not endure the notion that Lord Vargrave should guess his secret by an absence almost otherwise unaccountable, — he could not patiently bear to give Vargrave that triumph; it might be that, in the sternness of his self-esteem, he imagined he had already conquered all save affectionate interest in Evelyn's fate, and trusted too vainly to his own strength; and it might be, also, that he could not resist the temptation of seeing if Evelyn were contented with her lot, and if Vargrave were worthy of the blessing that awaited him. Whether one of these or all united made him resolve to brave his danger, or whether, after all, he yielded to a weakness, or consented to what — invited by Evelyn herself — was almost a social necessity, the reader and not the narrator shall decide.

Legard was gone; but Doltimore remained in the neighbourhood, having hired a hunting-box not far from Sir John Merton's manors, over which he easily obtained permission to sport. When he did not dine elsewhere, there was always a place for him at the parson's hospitable board, — and that place was generally next to Caroline. Mr. and Mrs. Merton had given up all hope of Mr. Maltravers for their eldest daughter; and, very strangely, this conviction came upon their minds on the first day they made the acquaintance of the young lord.

"My dear," said the rector, as he was winding up his watch, preparatory to entering the connubial couch, — "my dear, I don't think Mr. Maltravers is a marrying man."

"I was just going to make the same remark," said Mrs. Merton, drawing the clothes over her. "Lord Doltimore is a very fine young man, his estates unencumbered. I like him vastly, my love. He is evidently smitten with Caroline: so Lord Vargrave and Mrs. Hare said."

"Sensible, shrewd woman, Mrs. Hare. By the by, we'll send her a pineapple. Caroline was made to be a woman of rank!"

"Quite; so much self-possession!"

"And if Mr. Maltravers would sell or let Burleigh —"

"It would be so pleasant!"

"Had you not better give Caroline a hint?"

"My love, she is so sensible, let her go her own way."

"You are right, my dear Betsy; I shall always say that no one has more common-sense than you; you have brought up your children admirably!"

"Dear Charles!"

"It is coldish to-night, love," said the rector; and he put out the candle.

From that time, it was not the fault of Mr. and Mrs. Merton if Lord Doltimore did not find their house the pleasantest in the county.

One evening the rectory party were assembled together in the cheerful drawing-room. Cleveland, Mr. Merton, Sir John, and Lord Vargrave, reluctantly compelled to make up the fourth, were at the whist-table; Evelyn, Caroline, and Lord Doltimore were seated round the fire, and Mrs. Merton was working a footstool. The fire burned clear, the curtains were down, the children in bed: it was a family picture of elegant comfort.

Mr. Maltravers was announced.

"I am glad you are come at last," said Caroline, holding out her fair hand. "Mr. Cleveland could not answer for you. We are all disputing as to which mode of life is the happiest."

"And your opinion?" asked Maltravers, seating himself in the vacant chair, — it chanced to be next to Evelyn's.

"My opinion is decidedly in favour of London. A metro-

politan life, with its perpetual and graceful excitements, — the best music, the best companions, the best things in short. Provincial life is so dull, its pleasures so tiresome; to talk over the last year's news, and wear out one's last year's dresses, cultivate a conservatory, and play Pope Joan with a young party, — dreadful!"

"I agree with Miss Merton," said Lord Doltimore, solemnly; "not but what I like the country for three or four months in the year, with good shooting and hunting, and a large house properly filled, independent of one's own neighbourhood: but if I am condemned to choose one place to live in, give me Paris."

"Ah, Paris; I never was in Paris. I should so like to travel!" said Caroline.

"But the inns abroad are so very bad," said Lord Doltimore; "how people can rave about Italy, I can't think. I never suffered so much in my life as I did in Calabria; and at Venice I was bit to death by mosquitoes. Nothing like Paris, I assure you: don't you think so, Mr. Maltravers?"

"Perhaps I shall be able to answer you better in a short time. I think of accompanying Mr. Cleveland to Paris!"

"Indeed!" said Caroline. "Well, I envy you; but is it a sudden resolution?"

"Not very."

"Do you stay long?" asked Lord Doltimore.

"My stay is uncertain."

"And you won't let Burleigh in the meanwhile?"

"Let Burleigh? No; if it once pass from my hands it will be forever!"

Maltravers spoke gravely, and the subject was changed. Lord Doltimore challenged Caroline to chess.

They sat down, and Lord Doltimore arranged the pieces.

"Sensible man, Mr. Maltravers," said the young lord; "but I don't hit it off with him: Vargrave is more agreeable. Don't you think so?"

"Y—e—s."

"Lord Vargrave is very kind to me, — I never remember any one being more so; got Legard that appointment solely

because it would please *me*, — very friendly fellow! I mean to put myself under his wing next session!"

"You could not do better, I'm sure," said Caroline; "he is so much looked up to; I dare say he will be prime minister one of these days."

"I take the bishop: — do you think so really? — you are rather a politician?"

"Oh, no; not much of that. But my father and my uncle are stanch politicians; gentlemen know so much more than ladies. We should always go by their opinions. I think I will take the queen's pawn — your politics are the same as Lord Vargrave's?"

"Yes, I fancy so: at least I shall leave my proxy with him. Glad you don't like politics, — great bore."

"Why, so young, so connected as you are —" Caroline stopped short, and made a wrong move.

"I wish we were going to Paris together, *we* should enjoy it so;" and Lord Doltimore's knight checked the tower and queen.

Caroline coughed, and stretched her hand quickly to move.

"Pardon me, you will lose the game if you do so!" and Doltimore placed his hand on hers, their eyes met, Caroline turned away, and Lord Doltimore settled his right collar.

"And is it true? are you really going to leave us?" said Evelyn, and she felt very sad. But still the sadness might not be that of love, — she had felt sad after Legard had gone.

"I do not think I shall long stay away," said Maltravers, trying to speak indifferently. "Burleigh has become more dear to me than it was in earlier youth; perhaps because I have made myself duties there: and in other places I am but an isolated and useless unit in the great mass."

"You! everywhere, you must have occupations and resources, — everywhere, you must find yourself not alone. But you will not go yet?"

"Not yet: no. [Evelyn's spirits rose.] Have you read the book I sent you?" (It was one of De Staël's.)

"Yes; but it disappoints me."

"And why? It is eloquent."

"But is it true? Is there so much melancholy in life? Are the affections so full of bitterness? For me, I am so happy when with those I love! When I am with my mother, the air seems more fragrant, the skies more blue: it is surely not affection, but the absence of it, that makes us melancholy."

"Perhaps so; but if we had never known affection, we might not miss it: and the brilliant Frenchwoman speaks from memory, while you speak from hope, — memory, which is the ghost of joy: yet surely, even in the indulgence of affection, there is at times a certain melancholy, a certain fear. Have you never felt it, even with — with your mother?"

"Ah, yes! when she suffered, or when I have thought she loved me less than I desired."

"That must have been an idle and vain thought. Your mother! does she resemble you?"

"I wish I could think so. Oh, if you knew her! I have longed so often that you were acquainted with each other! It was she who taught me to sing your songs."

"My dear Mrs. Hare, we may as well throw up our cards," said the keen clear voice of Lord Vargrave: "you have played most admirably, and I know that your last card will be the ace of trumps; still the luck is against us."

"No, no; pray play it out, my lord."

"Quite useless, ma'am," said Sir John, showing two honours. "We have only the trick to make."

"Quite useless," echoed Lumley, tossing down his sovereigns, and rising with a careless yawn.

"How d'ye do, Maltravers?"

Maltravers rose; and Vargrave turned to Evelyn, and addressed her in a whisper. The proud Maltravers walked away, and suppressed a sigh; a moment more, and he saw Lord Vargrave occupying the chair he had left vacant. He laid his hand on Cleveland's shoulder.

"The carriage is waiting, — are you ready?"

CHAPTER X.

OBSCURIS vera involvens.¹ — VIRGIL.

A DAY or two after the date of the last chapter, Evelyn and Caroline were riding out with Lord Vargrave and Mr. Merton, and on returning home they passed through the village of Burleigh.

"Maltravers, I suppose, has an eye to the county one of these days," said Lord Vargrave, who honestly fancied that a man's eyes were always directed towards something for his own interest or advancement; "otherwise he could not surely take all this trouble about workhouses and paupers. Who could ever have imagined my romantic friend would sink into a country squire?"

"It is astonishing what talent and energy he throws into everything he attempts," said the parson. "One could not, indeed, have supposed that a man of genius could make a man of business."

"Flattering to your humble servant—whom all the world allow to be the last, and deny to be the first. But your remark shows what a sad possession genius is: like the rest of the world, you fancy that it cannot be of the least possible use. If a man is called a genius, it means that he is to be thrust out of all the good things in this life. He is not fit for anything but a garret! Put a *genius* into office! make a *genius* a bishop! or a lord chancellor!—the world would be turned topsy turvy! You see that you are quite astonished that a genius can be even a county magistrate, and know the difference between a spade and a poker! In fact, a genius is supposed to be the most ignorant, impracticable, good-for-nothing, do-nothing sort of thing that ever walked upon two legs. Well, when I began life I took excellent care that nobody should take *me* for a genius; and it is only within the last

¹ "Wrapping truth in obscurity."

year or two that I ventured to emerge a little out of my shell. I have not been the better for it; I was getting on faster while I was merely a plodder. The world is so fond of that droll fable, the hare and the tortoise, — it really believes because (I suppose the fable to be true!) a tortoise *once* beat a hare that all tortoises are much better runners than hares possibly can be. Mediocre men have the monopoly of the loaves and fishes; and even when talent does rise in life, it is a talent which only differs from mediocrity by being more energetic and bustling."

"You are bitter, Lord Vargrave," said Caroline, laughing; "yet surely you have had no reason to complain of the non-appreciation of talent?"

"Humph! if I had had a grain more talent I should have been crushed by it. There is a subtle allegory in the story of the lean poet, who put *lead* in his pocket to prevent being blown away! 'Mais à nos moutons,' — to return to Maltravers. Let us suppose that he was merely clever, had not had a particle of what is called genius, been merely a hard-working able gentleman, of good character and fortune, he might be half-way up the hill by this time; whereas now, what is he? Less before the public than he was at twenty-eight, — a discontented anchorite, a meditative idler."

"No, not that," said Evelyn, warmly, and then checked herself.

Lord Vargrave looked at her sharply; but his knowledge of life told him that Legard was a much more dangerous rival than Maltravers. Now and then, it is true, a suspicion to the contrary crossed him; but it did not take root and become a serious apprehension. Still, he did not quite like the tone of voice in which Evelyn had put her abrupt negative, and said, with a slight sneer, —

"If not that, what is he?"

"One who purchased by the noblest exertions the right to be idle," said Evelyn with spirit; "and whom genius itself will not suffer to be idle long."

"Besides," said Mr. Merton, "he has won a high reputation, which he cannot lose merely by not seeking to increase it."

"Reputation! Oh, yes! we give men like that — men of genius — a large property in the clouds, in order to justify ourselves in pushing them out of our way below. But if they are contented with fame, why, they deserve their fate. Hang fame, — give me power."

"And is there no power in genius?" said Evelyn, with deepening fervour; "no power over the mind, and the heart, and the thought; no power over its own time, over posterity, over nations yet uncivilized, races yet unborn?"

This burst from one so simple and young as Evelyn seemed to Vargrave so surprising that he stared on her without saying a word.

"You will laugh at my championship," she added, with a blush and a smile; "but you provoked the encounter."

"And you have won the battle," said Vargrave, with prompt gallantry. "My charming ward, every day develops in you some new gift of nature!"

Caroline, with a movement of impatience, put her horse into a canter.

Just at this time, from a cross-road, emerged a horseman, — it was Maltravers. The party halted, salutations were exchanged.

"I suppose you have been enjoying the sweet business of squiredom," said Vargrave, gayly: "Atticus and his farm, — classical associations! Charming weather for the agriculturists, eh! What news about corn and barley? I suppose our English habit of talking on the weather arose when we were all a squirearchal farming, George-the-Third kind of people! Weather is really a serious matter to gentlemen who are interested in beans and vetches, wheat and hay. You hang your happiness upon the changes of the moon!"

"As you upon the smiles of a minister. The weather of a court is more capricious than that of the skies, — at least we are better husbandmen than you who sow the wind and reap the whirlwind."

"Well retorted: and really, when I look round, I am half inclined to envy you. Were I not Vargrave, I would be Maltravers."

It was, indeed, a scene that seemed quiet and serene, with the English union of the feudal and the pastoral life, — the village-green, with its trim scattered cottages; the fields and pastures that spread beyond; the turf of the park behind, broken by the shadows of the unequal grounds, with its mounds and hollows and venerable groves, from which rose the turrets of the old Hall, its mullion windows gleaming in the western sun; a scene that preached tranquillity and content, and might have been equally grateful to humble philosophy and hereditary pride.

"I never saw any place so peculiar in its character as Burleigh," said the rector; "the old seats left to us in England are chiefly those of our great nobles. It is so rare to see one that does not aspire beyond the residence of a private gentleman preserve all the relics of the Tudor age."

"I think," said Vargrave, turning to Evelyn, "that as by my uncle's will your fortune is to be laid out in the purchase of land, we could not find a better investment than Burleigh. So, whenever you are inclined to sell, Maltravers, I think we must outbid Doltimore. What say you, my fair ward?"

"Leave Burleigh in peace, I beseech you!" said Maltravers, angrily.

"That is said like a Digby," returned Vargrave. "*Allons!* — will you not come home with us?"

"I thank you, — not to-day."

"We meet at Lord Raby's next Thursday. It is a ball given almost wholly in honour of your return to Burleigh; we are all going, — it is my young cousin's *début* at Knaresdean. We have all an interest in her conquests."

Now, as Maltravers looked up to answer, he caught Evelyn's glance, and his voice faltered.

"Yes," he said, "we shall meet — once again. Adieu!" He wheeled round his horse, and they separated.

"I can bear this no more," said Maltravers to himself; "I overrated my strength. To see her thus, day after day, and to know her 'another's', to writhe beneath his calm, unconscious assertion of his rights! Happy Vargrave! — and yet, ah! will *she* be happy? Oh, could I think so!"

Thus soliloquizing, he suffered the rein to fall on the neck of his horse, which paced slowly home through the village, till it stopped — as if in the mechanism of custom — at the door of a cottage a stone's throw from the lodge. At this door, indeed, for several successive days, had Maltravers stopped regularly; it was now tenanted by the poor woman his introduction to whom has been before narrated. She had recovered from the immediate effects of the injury she had sustained; but her constitution, greatly broken by previous suffering and exhaustion, had received a mortal shock. She was hurt inwardly; and the surgeon informed Maltravers that she had not many months to live. He had placed her under the roof of one of his favourite cottagers, where she received all the assistance and alleviation that careful nursing and medical advice could give her.

This poor woman, whose name was Sarah Elton, interested Maltravers much. She had known better days: there was a certain propriety in her expressions which denoted an education superior to her circumstances; and what touched Maltravers most, she seemed far more to feel her husband's death than her own sufferings, — which, somehow or other, is not common with widows the other side of forty! We say that youth easily consoles itself for the robberies of the grave, — middle age is a still better self-comforter. When Mrs. Elton found herself installed in the cottage, she looked round, and burst into tears.

“And William is not here!” she said. “Friends — friends! if we had had but one such friend before he died!”

Maltravers was pleased that her first thought was rather that of sorrow for the dead than of gratitude for the living. Yet Mrs. Elton was grateful, — simply, honestly, deeply grateful; her manner, her voice, betokened it. And she seemed so glad when her benefactor called to speak kindly and inquire cordially, that Maltravers did so constantly; at first from a compassionate and at last from a selfish motive — for who is not pleased to give pleasure? And Maltravers had so few in the world to care for him, that perhaps he was flattered by the grateful respect of this humble stranger.

When his horse stopped, the cottager's daughter opened the door and courtesied, — it was an invitation to enter; and he threw his rein over the paling and walked into the cottage.

Mrs. Elton, who had been seated by the open casement, rose to receive him. But Maltravers made her sit down, and soon put her at her ease. The woman and her daughter who occupied the cottage retired into the garden, and Mrs. Elton, watching them withdraw, then exclaimed abruptly, —

"Oh, sir, I have so longed to see you this morning! I so long to make bold to ask you whether, indeed, I dreamed it — or did I, when you first took me to your house — did I see —" She stopped abruptly; and though she strove to suppress her emotion, it was too strong for her efforts, — she sank back on her chair, pale as death, and almost gasped for breath.

Maltravers waited in surprise for her recovery.

"I beg pardon, sir, — I was thinking of days long past; and — but I wished to ask whether, when I lay in your hall, almost insensible, any one besides yourself and your servants were present? — or was it" — added the woman, with a shudder — "was it the dead?"

"I remember," said Maltravers, much struck and interested in her question and manner, "that a lady was present."

"It is so! it is so!" cried the woman, half rising and clasping her hands. "And she passed by this cottage a little time ago; her veil was thrown aside as she turned that fair young face towards the cottage. Her name, sir, — oh, what is her name? It was the same — the same face that shone across me in that hour of pain! I did not dream! I was not mad!"

"Compose yourself; you could never, I think, have seen that lady before. Her name is Cameron."

"Cameron — Cameron!" The woman shook her head mournfully. "No; that name is strange to me. And her mother, sir, — she is dead?"

"No; her mother lives."

A shade came over the face of the sufferer; and she said, after a pause, —

"My eyes deceive me then, sir; and, indeed, I feel that my

head is touched, and I wander sometimes. But the likeness was so great; yet that young lady is even lovelier!"

"Likenesses are very deceitful and very capricious, and depend more on fancy than reality. One person discovers a likeness between faces most dissimilar, — a likeness invisible to others. But who does Miss Cameron resemble?"

"One now dead, sir; dead many years ago. But it is a long story, and one that lies heavy on my conscience. Some day or other, if you will give me leave, sir, I will unburden myself to you."

"If I can assist you in any way, command me. Meanwhile, have you no friends, no relations, no children, whom you would wish to see?"

"Children! — no, sir; I never had but one child of *my own*" (she laid an emphasis on the last words), "and that died in a foreign land."

"And no other relatives?"

"None, sir. My history is very short and simple. I was well brought up, — an only child. My father was a small farmer; he died when I was sixteen, and I went into service with a kind old lady and her daughter, who treated me more as a companion than a servant. I was a vain, giddy girl, then, sir. A young man, the son of a neighbouring farmer, courted me, and I was much attached to him; but neither of us had money, and his parents would not give their consent to our marrying. I was silly enough to think that, if William loved me, he should have braved all; and his prudence mortified me, so I married another whom I did not love. I was rightly punished, for he ill-used me and took to drinking; I returned to my old service to escape from him — for I was with child, and my life was in danger from his violence. He died suddenly, and in debt. And then, afterwards, a gentleman — a rich gentleman — to whom I rendered a service (do not misunderstand me, sir, if I say the service was one of which I repent), gave me money, and made me rich enough to marry my first lover; and William and I went to America. We lived many years in New York upon our little fortune comfortably; and I was a long while happy, for I had always

loved William dearly. My first affliction was the death of my child by my first husband; but I was soon roused from my grief. William schemed and speculated, as everybody does in America, and so we lost all; and William was weakly and could not work. At length he got the place of steward on board a vessel from New York to Liverpool, and I was taken to assist in the cabin. We wanted to come to London; I thought my old benefactor might do something for us, though he had never answered the letters I sent to him. But poor William fell ill on board, and died in sight of land."

Mrs. Elton wept bitterly, but with the subdued grief of one to whom tears have been familiar; and when she recovered, she soon brought her humble tale to an end. She herself, incapacitated from all work by sorrow and a breaking constitution, was left in the streets of Liverpool without other means of subsistence than the charitable contributions of the passengers and sailors on board the vessel. With this sum she had gone to London, where she found her old patron had been long since dead, and she had no claims on his family. She had, on quitting England, left one relation settled in a town in the North; thither she now repaired, to find her last hope wrecked; the relation also was dead and gone. Her money was now spent, and she had begged her way along the road, or through the lanes, she scarce knew whither, till the accident which, in shortening her life, had raised up a friend for its close.

"And such, sir," said she in conclusion, "such has been the story of my life, except one part of it, which, if I get stronger, I can tell better; but you will excuse that now."

"And are you comfortable and contented, my poor friend? These people are kind to you?"

"Oh, so kind! And every night we all pray for you, sir; you ought to be happy, if the blessings of the poor can avail the rich."

Maltravers remounted his horse, and sought his home; and his heart was lighter than before he entered that cottage. But at evening Cleveland talked of Vargrave and Evelyn, and the

good fortune of the one, and the charms of the other; and the wound, so well concealed, bled afresh.

"I heard from De Montaigne the other day," said Ernest, just as they were retiring for the night, "and his letter decides my movements. If you will accept me, then, as a travelling companion, I will go with you to Paris. Have you made up your mind to leave Burleigh on Saturday?"

"Yes; that gives us a day to recover from Lord Raby's ball. I am so delighted at your offer! We need only stay a day or so in town. The excursion will do you good, — your spirits, my dear Ernest, seem more dejected than when you first returned to England: you live too much alone here; you will enjoy Burleigh more on your return. And perhaps then you will open the old house a little more to the neighbourhood, and to your friends. They expect it: you are looked to for the county."

"I have done with politics, and sicken but for peace."

"Pick up a wife in Paris, and you will then know that peace is an impossible possession," said the old bachelor, laughing.

BOOK V.

Νήπιος οὐδ' ἴσασιν ὅσῳ πλέον ἡμῖν πάντες. — HESIOD: *Op. et Dies*, 40.

"FOOLS blind to truth ; nor know their erring soul
How much the half is better than the whole."

CHAPTER I.

Do as the Heavens have done ; forget your evil ;
With them, forgive yourself. — *The Winter's Tale*.

. . . . The sweet'st companion that e'er man
Bred his hopes out of. — *Ibid.*

THE curate of Brook-Green was sitting outside his door. The vicarage which he inhabited was a straggling, irregular, but picturesque building, — humble enough to suit the means of the curate, yet large enough to accommodate the vicar. It had been built in an age when the *indigentes et pauperes* for whom universities were founded supplied, more than they do now, the fountains of the Christian ministry, when pastor and flock were more on an equality.

From under a rude and arched porch, with an oaken settle on either side for the poor visitor, the door opened at once upon the old-fashioned parlour, — a homely but pleasant room, with one wide but low cottage casement, beneath which stood the dark shining table that supported the large Bible in its green baize cover; the Concordance, and the last Sunday's sermon, in its jetty case. There by the fireplace stood the bachelor's round elbow-chair, with a needlework cushion at the back; a walnut-tree bureau, another table or two, half a dozen plain chairs, constituted the rest of the furniture, saving some two or three hundred volumes, ranged in

neat shelves on the clean wainscoted walls. There was another room, to which you ascended by two steps, communicating with this parlour, smaller but finer, and inhabited only on festive days, when Lady Vargrave, or some other quiet neighbour, came to drink tea with the good curate.

An old housekeeper and her grandson — a young fellow of about two and twenty, who tended the garden, milked the cow, and did in fact what he was wanted to do — composed the establishment of the humble minister.

We have digressed from Mr. Aubrey himself.

The curate was seated, then, one fine summer morning, on a bench at the left of his porch, screened from the sun by the cool boughs of a chestnut-tree, the shadow of which half covered the little lawn that separated the precincts of the house from those of silent Death and everlasting Hope; above the irregular and moss-grown paling rose the village church; and, through openings in the trees, beyond the burial-ground, partially gleamed the white walls of Lady Vargrave's cottage, and were seen at a distance the sails on the —

“Mighty waters, rolling evermore.”

The old man was calmly enjoying the beauty of the morning, the freshness of the air, the warmth of the dancing beam, and not least, perhaps, his own peaceful thoughts, — the spontaneous children of a contemplative spirit and a quiet conscience. His was the age when we most sensitively enjoy the mere sense of existence, — when the face of Nature and a passive conviction of the benevolence of our Great Father suffice to create a serene and ineffable happiness, which rarely visits us till we have done with the passions; till memories, if more alive than heretofore, are yet mellowed in the hues of time, and Faith softens into harmony all their asperities and harshness; till nothing within us remains to cast a shadow over the things without; and on the verge of life, the Angels are nearer to us than of yore. There is an old age which has more youth of heart than youth itself!

As the old man thus sat, the little gate through which, on Sabbath days, he was wont to pass from the humble mansion

to the house of God noiselessly opened, and Lady Vargrave appeared.

The curate rose when he perceived her; and the lady's fair features were lighted up with a gentle pleasure, as she pressed his hand and returned his salutation.

There was a peculiarity in Lady Vargrave's countenance which I have rarely seen in others. Her smile, which was singularly expressive, came less from the lip than from the eyes; it was almost as if the brow smiled; it was as the sudden and momentary vanishing of a light but melancholy cloud that usually rested upon the features, placid as they were.

They sat down on the rustic bench, and the sea-breeze waned amongst the quivering leaves of the chestnut-tree that overhung their seat.

"I have come, as usual, to consult my kind friend," said Lady Vargrave; "and, as usual also, it is about our absent Evelyn."

"Have you heard again from her, this morning?"

"Yes; and her letter increases the anxiety which your observation, so much deeper than mine, first awakened."

"Does she then write much of Lord Vargrave?"

"Not a great deal; but the little she does say, betrays how much she shrinks from the union my poor husband desired: more, indeed, than ever! But this is not all, nor the worst; for you know that the late lord had provided against that probability—he loved her so tenderly, his ambition for her only came from his affection; and the letter he left behind him pardons and releases her, if she revolts from the choice he himself preferred."

"Lord Vargrave is, perhaps, a generous, he certainly seems a candid, man, and he must be sensible that his uncle has already done all that justice required."

"I think so. But this, as I said, is not all; I have brought the letter to show you. It seems to me as you apprehended. This Mr. Maltravers has wound himself about her thoughts more than she herself imagines; you see how she dwells on all that concerns him, and how, after checking herself, she returns again and again to the same subject."

The curate put on his spectacles, and took the letter. It was a strange thing, that old gray-haired minister evincing such grave interest in the secrets of that young heart! But they who would take charge of the soul must never be too wise to regard the heart!

Lady Vargrave looked over his shoulder as he bent down to read, and at times placed her finger on such passages as she wished him to note. The old curate nodded as she did so; but neither spoke till the letter was concluded.

The curate then folded up the epistle, took off his spectacles, hemmed, and looked grave.

"Well," said Lady Vargrave, anxiously, "well?"

"My dear friend, the letter requires consideration. In the first place, it is clear to me that, in spite of Lord Vargrave's presence at the rectory, his lordship so manages matters that the poor child is unable of herself to bring that matter to a conclusion. And, indeed, to a mind so sensitively delicate and honourable, it is no easy task."

"Shall I write to Lord Vargrave?"

"Let us think of it. In the meanwhile, this Mr. Maltravers —"

"Ah, this Mr. Maltravers!"

"The child shows us more of her heart than she thinks of; and yet I myself am puzzled. If you observe, she has only once or twice spoken of the Colonel Legard whom she has made acquaintance with; while she treats at length of Mr. Maltravers, and confesses the effect he has produced on her mind. Yet, do you know, I more dread the caution respecting the first than all the candour that betrays the influence of the last? There is a great difference between first fancy and first love."

"Is there?" said the lady, abstractedly.

"Again, neither of us is acquainted with this singular man, — I mean Maltravers; his character, temper, and principles, of all of which Evelyn is too young, too guileless, to judge for herself. One thing, however, in her letter speaks in his favour."

"What is that?"

"He absents himself from her. This, if he has discovered her secret, or if he himself is sensible of too great a charm in her presence, would be the natural course that an honourable and a strong mind would pursue."

"What! — if he love her?"

"Yes; while he believes her hand is engaged to another."

"True! What shall be done — if Evelyn should love, and love in vain? Ah, it is the misery of a whole existence!"

"Perhaps she had better return to us," said Mr. Aubrey; "and yet, if already it be too late, and her affections are engaged, we should still remain in ignorance respecting the motives and mind of the object of her attachment; and he, too, might not know the true nature of the obstacle connected with Lord Vargrave's claims."

"Shall I, then, go to her? You know how I shrink from strangers; how I fear curiosity, doubts, and questions; how [and Lady Vargrave's voice faltered] — how unfitted I am for — for —" she stopped short, and a faint blush overspread her cheeks.

The curate understood her, and was moved.

"Dear friend," said he, "will you intrust this charge to myself? You know how Evelyn is endeared to me by certain recollections! Perhaps, better than you, I may be enabled silently to examine if this man be worthy of her, and one who could secure her happiness; perhaps, better than you I may ascertain the exact nature of her own feelings towards him; perhaps, too, better than you I may effect an understanding with Lord Vargrave."

"You are always my kindest friend," said the lady, with emotion; "how much I already owe you! what hopes beyond the grave! what —"

"Hush!" interrupted the curate, gently; "your own good heart and pure intentions have worked out your own atonement — may I hope also your own content? Let us return to our Evelyn. Poor child! how unlike this despondent letter to her gay light spirits when with us! We acted for the best; yet perhaps we did wrong to yield her up to strangers. And this Maltravers — with her enthusiasm and quick susceptibil-



"THE LITTLE GATE OPENED, AND LADY VARGRAVE APPEARED."



ities to genius, she was half prepared to imagine him all she depicts him to be. He must have a spell in his works that I have not discovered, for at times it seems to operate even on you."

"Because," said Lady Vargrave, "they remind me of *his* conversation, *his* habits of thought. If like *him* in other things, Evelyn may indeed be happy!"

"And if," said the curate, curiously, — "if now that you are free, you were ever to meet with *him* again, and his memory had been as faithful as yours; and if he offered the sole atonement in his power, for all that his early error cost you; if such a chance should happen in the vicissitudes of life, you would —"

The curate stopped short; for he was struck by the exceeding paleness of his friend's cheek, and the tremor of her delicate frame.

"If that were to happen," said she, in a very low voice, "if we were to meet again, and if he were—as you and Mrs. Leslie seem to think—poor, and, like myself, humbly born, if my fortune could assist him, if my love could still—changed, altered as I am—ah! do not talk of it—I cannot bear the thought of happiness! And yet, if before I die I *could* but see him again!" She clasped her hands fervently as she spoke, and the blush that overspread her face threw over it so much of bloom and freshness, that even Evelyn, at that moment, would scarcely have seemed more young. "Enough!" she added, after a little while, as the glow died away. "It is but a foolish hope; all earthly love is buried; and my heart is there!"—she pointed to the heavens, and both were silent.

CHAPTER II.

QUIBUS otio vel magnifice, vel molliter, vivere copia era incerta pro certis malebant.¹ — SALLUST.

LORD RABY — one of the wealthiest and most splendid noblemen in England — was prouder, perhaps, of his provincial distinctions than the eminence of his rank or the fashion of his wife. The magnificent châteaux, the immense estates, of our English peers tend to preserve to us in spite of the freedom, bustle, and commercial grandeur of our people more of the Norman attributes of aristocracy than can be found in other countries. In his county, the great noble is a petty prince; his house is a court; his possessions and munificence are a boast to every proprietor in his district. They are as fond of talking of *the earl's* or *the duke's* movements and entertainments, as Dangeau was of the gossip of the Tuileries and Versailles.

Lord Raby, while affecting, as lieutenant of the county, to make no political distinctions between squire and squire — hospitable and affable to all — still, by that very absence of exclusiveness, gave a tone to the politics of the whole county; and converted many who had once thought differently on the respective virtues of Whigs and Tories. A great man never loses so much as when he exhibits intolerance, or parades the right of persecution.

"My tenants shall vote exactly as they please," said Lord Raby; and he was never known to have a tenant vote against his wishes! Keeping a vigilant eye on all the interests, and conciliating all the proprietors, in the county, he not only never lost a friend, but he kept together a body of partisans that constantly added to its numbers.

¹ "They who had the means to live at ease, either in splendour or in luxury, preferred the uncertainty of change to their natural security."

Sir John Merton's colleague, a young Lord Nelthorpe, who could not speak three sentences if you took away his hat, and who, constant at Almack's, was not only inaudible but invisible in parliament, had no chance of being re-elected. Lord Nelthorpe's father, the Earl of Mainwaring, was a new peer; and, next to Lord Raby, the richest nobleman in the county. Now, though they were much of the same politics, Lord Raby hated Lord Mainwaring. They were too near each other, — they clashed; they had the jealousy of rival princes!

Lord Raby was delighted at the notion of getting rid of Lord Nelthorpe, — it would be so sensible a blow to the Mainwaring interest. The party had been looking out for a new candidate, and Maltravers had been much talked of. It is true that, when in parliament some years before, the politics of Maltravers had differed from those of Lord Raby and his set. But Maltravers had of late taken no share in politics, had uttered no political opinions, was intimate with the electioneering Mertons, was supposed to be a discontented man, — and politicians believe in no discontent that is not political. Whispers were afloat that Maltravers had grown wise, and changed his views: some remarks of his, more theoretical than practical, were quoted in favour of this notion. Parties, too, had much changed since Maltravers had appeared on the busy scene, — new questions had arisen, and the old ones had died off.

Lord Raby and his party thought that, if Maltravers could be secured to them, no one would better suit their purpose. Political faction loves converts better even than consistent adherents. A man's rise in life generally dates from a well-timed *rat*. His high reputation, his provincial rank as the representative of the oldest commoner's family in the county, his age, which combined the energy of one period with the experience of another, — all united to accord Maltravers a preference over richer men. Lord Raby had been pointedly courteous and flattering to the master of Burleigh; and he now contrived it so, that the brilliant entertainment he was about to give might appear in compliment to a distinguished neighbour, returned to fix his residence on his patrimonial prop-

erty, while in reality it might serve an electioneering purpose, — serve to introduce Maltravers to the county, as if under his lordship's own wing, and minister to political uses that went beyond the mere representation of the county.

Lord Vargrave had, during his stay at Merton Rectory, paid several visits to Knaresdean, and held many private conversations with the marquess: the result of these conversations was a close union of schemes and interests between the two noblemen. Dissatisfied with the political conduct of government, Lord Raby was also dissatisfied that, from various party reasons, a nobleman beneath himself in rank, and as he thought in influence, had obtained a preference in a recent vacancy among the Knights of the Garter. And if Vargrave had a talent in the world it was in discovering the weak points of men whom he sought to gain, and making the vanities of others conduce to his own ambition.

The festivities of Knaresdean gave occasion to Lord Raby to unite at his house the more prominent of those who thought and acted in concert with Lord Vargrave; and in this secret senate the operations for the following session were to be seriously discussed and gravely determined.

On the day which was to be concluded with the ball at Knaresdean, Lord Vargrave went before the rest of the Merton party, for he was engaged to dine with the marquess.

On arriving at Knaresdean, Lumley found Lord Saxingham and some other politicians, who had arrived the preceding day, closeted with Lord Raby; and Vargrave, who shone to yet greater advantage in the diplomacy of party management than in the arena of parliament, brought penetration, energy, and decision to timid and fluctuating counsels. Lord Vargrave lingered in the room after the first bell had summoned the other guests to depart.

"My dear lord," said he then, "though no one would be more glad than myself to secure Maltravers to our side, I very much doubt whether you will succeed in doing so. On the one hand, he appears altogether disgusted with politics and parliament; and on the other hand, I fancy that reports of his change of opinions are, if not wholly unfounded, very unduly

coloured. Moreover, to do him justice, I think that he is not one to be blinded and flattered into the pale of a party; and your bird will fly away after you have wasted a bucketful of salt on his tail."

"Very possibly," said Lord Raby, laughing, — "you know him better than I do. But there are many purposes to serve in this matter, — purposes too provincial to interest you. In the first place, we shall humble the Nelthorpe interest, merely by showing that we *do* think of a new member; secondly, we shall get up a manifestation of feeling that would be impossible, unless we were provided with a centre of attraction; thirdly, we shall rouse a certain emulation among other county gentlemen, and if Maltravers decline, we shall have many applicants; and fourthly, suppose Maltravers has not changed his opinions, we shall make him suspected by the party he really does belong to, and which would be somewhat formidable if he were to head them. In fact, these are mere county tactics that you can't be expected to understand."

"I see you are quite right: meanwhile you will at least have an opportunity (though I say it, who should not say it) to present to the county one of the prettiest young ladies that ever graced the halls of Knaresdean."

"Ah, Miss Cameron! I have heard much of her beauty: you are a lucky fellow, Vargrave! By the by, are we to say anything of the engagement?"

"Why, indeed, my dear lord, it is now so publicly known, that it would be false delicacy to affect concealment."

"Very well; I understand."

"How long I have detained you — a thousand pardons! — I have but just time to dress. In four or five months I must remember to leave you a longer time for your toilet."

"Me — how?"

"Oh, the Duke of — can't live long; and I always observe that when a handsome man has the Garter, he takes a long time pulling up his stockings."

"Ha, ha! you are so droll, Vargrave."

"Ha, ha! I must be off."

"The more publicity is given to this arrangement, the more

difficult for Evelyn to shy at the leap," muttered Vargrave to himself as he closed the door. "Thus do I make all things useful to myself!"

The dinner party were assembled in the great drawing-room, when Maltravers and Cleveland, also invited guests to the banquet, were announced. Lord Raby received the former with marked *empressement*; and the stately marchioness honoured him with her most gracious smile. Formal presentations to the rest of the guests were interchanged; and it was not till the circle was fully gone through that Maltravers perceived, seated by himself in a corner, to which he had shrunk on the entrance of Maltravers, a gray-haired solitary man, — it was Lord Saxingham! The last time they had met was in the death-chamber of Florence; and the old man forgot for the moment the anticipated dukedom, and the dreamed-of premier-ship, and his heart flew back to the grave of his only child! They saluted each other, and shook hands in silence. And Vargrave — whose eye was on them — Vargrave, whose arts had made that old man childless, felt not a pang of remorse! Living ever in the future, Vargrave almost seemed to have lost his memory. He knew not what regret was. It is a condition of life with men thoroughly worldly that they never look behind!

The signal was given: in due order the party were marshalled into the great hall, — a spacious and lofty chamber, which had received its last alteration from the hand of Inigo Jones; though the massive ceiling, with its antique and grotesque masques, betrayed a much earlier date, and contrasted with the Corinthian pilasters that adorned the walls, and supported the music-gallery, from which waved the flags of modern warfare and its mimeries, — the eagle of Napoleon, a token of the services of Lord Raby's brother (a distinguished cavalry officer in command at Waterloo), in juxtaposition with a much gayer and more glittering banner, emblematic of the martial fame of Lord Raby himself, as Colonel of the B——shire volunteers!

The music pealed from the gallery, the plate glittered on the board; the ladies wore diamonds, and the gentlemen who

had them wore stars. It was a very fine sight, that banquet! — such as became the festive day of a lord-lieutenant whose ancestors had now defied, and now intermarried, with royalty. But there was very little talk, and no merriment. People at the top of the table drank wine with those at the bottom; and gentlemen and ladies seated next to each other whispered languidly in monosyllabic commune. On one side, Maltravers was flanked by a Lady Somebody Something, who was rather deaf, and very much frightened for fear he should talk Greek; on the other side he was relieved by Sir John Merton, — very civil, very pompous, and talking, at strictured intervals, about county matters, in a measured intonation, savouring of the House-of-Commons jerk at the end of the sentence.

As the dinner advanced to its close, Sir John became a little more diffuse, though his voice sank into a whisper.

"I fear there will be a split in the Cabinet before parliament meets."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; Vargrave and the premier cannot pull together very long. Clever man, Vargrave! but he has not enough stake in the country for a leader!"

"All men have public character to stake; and if that be good, I suppose no stake can be better?"

"Humph! — yes — very true; but still, when a man has land and money, his opinions, in a country like this, very properly carry more weight with them. If Vargrave, for instance, had Lord Raby's property, no man could be more fit for a leader, — a prime minister. We might then be sure that he would have no selfish interest to further: he would not play tricks with his party — you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"I am not a party man, as you may remember; indeed, you and I have voted alike on the same questions. Measures, not men, — that is my maxim; but still I don't like to see men placed above their proper stations."

"Maltravers, a glass of wine," said Lord Vargrave across the table. "Will you join us, Sir John?"

Sir John bowed.

"Certainly," he resumed, "Vargrave is a pleasant man and a good speaker; but still they say he is far from rich, — embarrassed, indeed. However, when he marries Miss Cameron it may make a great difference, — give him more respectability; do you know what her fortune is — something immense?"

"Yes, I believe so; I don't know."

"My brother says that Vargrave is most amiable. The young lady is very handsome, almost too handsome for a wife — don't you think so? Beauties are all very well in a ball-room; but they are not calculated for domestic life. I am sure you agree with me. I have heard, indeed, that Miss Cameron is rather learned; but there is so much scandal in a country neighbourhood, — people are so ill-natured. I dare say she is not more learned than other young ladies, poor girl! What do you think?"

"Miss Cameron is — is very accomplished, I believe. And so you think the Government cannot stand?"

"I don't say that, — very far from it; but I fear there must be a change. However, if the country gentlemen hold together, I do not doubt but what we shall weather the storm. The landed interest, Mr. Maltravers, is the great stay of this country, — the sheet-anchor, I may say. I suppose Lord Vargrave, who seems, I must say, to have right notions on this head, will invest Miss Cameron's fortune in land. But though one may buy an estate, one can't buy an old family, Mr. Maltravers! — you and I may be thankful for that. By the way, who was Miss Cameron's mother, Lady Vargrave? — something low, I fear; nobody knows."

"I am not acquainted with Lady Vargrave; your sister-in-law speaks of her most highly. And the daughter in herself is a sufficient guarantee for the virtues of the mother."

"Yes; and Vargrave on one side, at least, has himself nothing in the way of family to boast of."

The ladies left the hall, the gentlemen re-seated themselves. Lord Raby made some remark on politics to Sir John Merton, and the whole round of talkers immediately followed their leader.

"It is a thousand pities, Sir John," said Lord Raby, "that you have not a colleague more worthy of you; Nelthorpe never attends a committee, does he?"

"I cannot say that he is a very active member; but he is young, and we must make allowances for him," said Sir John, discreetly; for he had no desire to oust his colleague, — it was agreeable enough to be *the* efficient member.

"In these times," said Lord Raby, loftily, "allowances are not to be made for systematic neglect of duty; we shall have a stormy session; the Opposition is no longer to be despised; perhaps a dissolution may be nearer at hand than we think for. As for Nelthorpe, he cannot come in again."

"That I am quite sure of," said a fat country gentleman of great weight in the county; "he not only was absent on the great Malt question, but he never answered my letter respecting the Canal Company."

"Not answered your letter!" said Lord Raby, lifting up his hands and eyes in amaze and horror. "What conduct! Ah, Mr. Maltravers, you are the man for us!"

"Hear! hear!" cried the fat squire.

"Hear!" echoed Vargrave; and the approving sound went round the table.

Lord Raby rose. "Gentlemen, fill your glasses; a health to our distinguished neighbour!"

The company applauded; each in his turn smiled, nodded, and drank to Maltravers, who, though taken by surprise, saw at once the course to pursue. He returned thanks simply and shortly; and without pointedly noticing the allusion in which Lord Raby had indulged, remarked, incidentally, that he had retired, certainly for some years — perhaps forever — from political life.

Vargrave smiled significantly at Lord Raby, and hastened to lead the conversation into party discussion. Wrapped in his proud disdain of what he considered the contests of factions for toys and shadows, Maltravers remained silent; and the party soon broke up, and adjourned to the ballroom.

CHAPTER III.

Le plus grand défaut de la pénétration n'est pas de n'aller point jusqu'au but, — c'est de la passer.¹ — LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

EVELYN had looked forward to the ball at Knaresdean with feelings deeper than those which usually inflame the fancy of a girl proud of her dress and confident of her beauty. Whether or not she *loved* Maltravers, in the true acceptance of the word "love," it is certain that he had acquired a most powerful command over her mind and imagination. She felt the warmest interest in his welfare, the most anxious desire for his esteem, the deepest regret at the thought of their estrangement. At Knaresdean she should meet Maltravers, — in crowds, it is true; but still she should meet him; she should see him towering superior above the herd; she should hear him praised; she should mark him, the observed of all. But there was another and a deeper source of joy within her. A letter had been that morning received from Aubrey, in which he had announced his arrival for the next day. The letter, though affectionate, was short. Evelyn had been some months absent, — Lady Vargrave was anxious to make arrangements for her return; but it was to be at her option whether she would accompany the curate home. Now, besides her delight at seeing once more the dear old man, and hearing from his lips that her mother was well and happy, Evelyn hailed in his arrival the means of extricating herself from her position with Lord Vargrave. She would confide in him her increased repugnance to that union, he would confer with Lord Vargrave; and then — and then — did there come once more the thought of Maltravers? No! I fear it was not Maltravers

¹ "The greatest defect of penetration is not that of not going just up to the point, — 't is the passing it."

who called forth that smile and that sigh! Strange girl, you know not your own mind! — but few of us, at your age, do.

In all the gayety of hope, in the pride of dress and half-conscious loveliness, Evelyn went with a light step into Caroline's room. Miss Merton had already dismissed her woman, and was seated by her writing-table, leaning her cheek thoughtfully on her hand.

"Is it time to go?" said she, looking up. "Well, we shall put Papa, and the coachman, and the horses, too, in excellent humour. How well you look! Really, Evelyn, you are indeed beautiful!" and Caroline gazed with honest but not unenvious admiration at the fairy form so rounded and yet so delicate, and the face that seemed to blush at its own charms.

"I am sure I can return the flattery," said Evelyn, laughing bashfully.

"Oh, as for me, I am well enough in my way: and hereafter, I dare say, we may be rival beauties. I hope we shall remain good friends, and rule the world with divided empire. Do you not long for the stir, and excitement, and ambition of London? — for ambition is open to us as to men!"

"No, indeed," replied Evelyn, smiling; "I could be ambitious, indeed; but it would not be for myself, but for —"

"A husband, perhaps; well, you will have ample scope for such sympathy. Lord Vargrave —"

"Lord Vargrave again?" and Evelyn's smile vanished, and she turned away.

"Ah," said Caroline, "I should have made Vargrave an excellent wife — pity he does not think so! As it is, I must set up for myself and become a *maîtresse femme*. So you think I look well to-night? I am glad of it — Lord Doltimore is one who will be guided by what other people say."

"You are not serious about Lord Doltimore?"

"Most sadly serious."

"Impossible! you could not speak so if you loved him."

"Loved him! no! but I intend to marry him."

Evelyn was revolted, but still incredulous.

"And you, too, will marry one whom you do not love — 't is our fate —"

"Never!"

"We shall see."

Evelyn's heart was damped, and her spirits fell.

"Tell me now," said Caroline, pressing on the wrung withers, "do you not think this excitement, partial and provincial though it be — the sense of beauty, the hope of conquest, the consciousness of power — better than the dull monotony of the Devonshire cottage? Be honest —"

"No, no, indeed!" answered Evelyn, tearfully and passionately; "one hour with my mother, one smile from her lips, were worth it all."

"And in your visions of marriage, you think then of nothing but roses and doves, — love in a cottage!"

"Love in a home, no matter whether a palace or a cottage," returned Evelyn.

"Home!" repeated Caroline, bitterly; "home, — home is the English synonym for the French *ennui*. But I hear Papa on the stairs."

A ballroom — what a scene of commonplace! how hackneyed in novels! how trite in ordinary life! and yet ballrooms have a character and a sentiment of their own, for all tempers and all ages. Something in the lights, the crowd, the music, conduces to stir up many of the thoughts that belong to fancy and romance. It is a melancholy scene to men after a certain age. It revives many of those lighter and more graceful images connected with the wandering desires of youth, — shadows that crossed us, and seemed love, but were not; having much of the grace and charm, but none of the passion and the tragedy, of love. So many of our earliest and gentlest recollections are connected with those chalked floors, and that music painfully gay, and those quiet nooks and corners, where the talk that hovers about the heart and does not touch it has been held. Apart and unsympathizing in that austerer wisdom which comes to us after deep passions have been excited, we see form after form chasing the butterflies that dazzle us no longer among the flowers that have evermore lost their fragrance.

Somehow or other, it is one of the scenes that remind us

most forcibly of the loss of youth! We are brought so closely in contact with the young and with the short-lived pleasures that once pleased us, and have forfeited all bloom. Happy the man who turns from "the tinkling cymbal" and "the gallery of pictures," and can think of some watchful eye and some kind heart *at home*; but those who have no home — and they are a numerous tribe — never feel lonelier hermits or sadder moralists than in such a crowd.

Maltravers leaned abstractedly against the wall, and some such reflections, perhaps, passed within, as the plumes waved and the diamonds glittered around him. Ever too proud to be vain, the *monstrari digito* had not flattered even in the commencement of his career. And now he heeded not the eyes that sought his look, nor the admiring murmur of lips anxious to be overheard. Affluent, well-born, unmarried, and still in the prime of life, — in the small circles of a province, Ernest Maltravers would in himself have been an object of interest to the diplomacy of mothers and daughters; and the false glare of reputation necessarily deepened curiosity, and widened the range of speculators and observers.

Suddenly, however, a new object of attention excited new interest; new whispers ran through the crowd, and these awakened Maltravers from his revery. He looked up, and beheld all eyes fixed upon one form! His own eyes encountered those of Evelyn Cameron!

It was the first time he had seen this beautiful young person in all the *éclat*, pomp, and circumstance of her station, as the heiress of the opulent Templeton, — the first time he had seen her the cynosure of crowds, who, had her features been homely, would have admired the charms of her fortune in her face. And now, as radiant with youth, and the flush of excitement on her soft cheek, she met his eye, he said to himself: "And could I have wished one so new to the world to have united her lot with a man for whom all that to her is delight has grown wearisome and stale? Could I have been justified in stealing her from the admiration that, at her age and to her sex, has so sweet a flattery? Or, on the other hand, could I have gone back to her years, and sympathized

with feelings that time has taught me to despise? Better as it is."

Influenced by these thoughts, the greeting of Maltravers disappointed and saddened Evelyn, she knew not why; it was constrained and grave.

"Does not Miss Cameron look well?" whispered Mrs. Merton, on whose arm the heiress leaned. "You observe what a sensation she creates?"

Evelyn overheard, and blushed as she stole a glance at Maltravers. There was something mournful in the admiration which spoke in his deep earnest eyes.

"Everywhere," said he, calmly, and in the same tone, "everywhere Miss Cameron appears, she must outshine all others." He turned to Evelyn, and said with a smile, "You must learn to inure yourself to admiration; a year or two hence, and you will not blush at your own gifts!"

"And you, too, contribute to spoil me! — fie!"

"Are you so easily spoiled? If I meet you hereafter, you will think my compliments cold to the common language of others."

"You do not know me, — perhaps you never will."

"I am contented with the fair pages I have already read."

"Where is Lady Raby?" asked Mrs. Merton. "Oh, I see; Evelyn, my love, we must present ourselves to our hostess."

The ladies moved on; and when Maltravers next caught a glance of Evelyn, she was with Lady Raby, and Lord Vargrave also was by her side.

The whispers round him had grown louder.

"Very lovely indeed! so young, too! and she is really going to be married to Lord Vargrave: so much older than she is, — quite a sacrifice!"

"Scarcely so. He is so agreeable, and still handsome. But are you sure that the thing is settled?"

"Oh, yes. Lord Raby himself told me so. It will take place very soon."

"But do you know who her mother was? I cannot make out."

"Nothing particular. You know the late Lord Vargrave

was a man of low birth. I believe she was a widow of his own rank; she lives quite in seclusion."

"How d'ye do, Mr. Maltravers? So glad to see you," said the quick, shrill voice of Mrs. Hare. "Beautiful ball! Nobody does things like Lord Raby; don't you dance?"

"No, madam."

"Oh, you young gentlemen are so *fine* nowadays!" (Mrs. Hare, laying stress on the word *young*, thought she had paid a very elegant compliment, and ran on with increased complacency.)

"You are going to let Burleigh, I hear, to Lord Doltimore, — is it true? No! really now, what stories people do tell. Elegant man, Lord Doltimore! Is it true, that Miss Caroline is going to marry his lordship? Great match! No scandal, I hope; you'll excuse *me*! Two weddings on the *tapis*, — quite stirring for our stupid county. Lady Vargrave and Lady Doltimore, two new peeresses. Which do you think is the handsomer? Miss Merton is the taller, but there is something fierce in her eyes. Don't you think so? By the by, I wish you joy, — you'll excuse *me*."

"Wish me joy, madam?"

"Oh, you are so close. Mr. Hare says he shall support you. You will have all the ladies with you. Well, I declare, Lord Vargrave is going to dance. How old is he, do you think?"

Maltravers uttered an audible *pshaw*, and moved away; but his penance was not over. Lord Vargrave, much as he disliked dancing, still thought it wise to ask the fair hand of Evelyn; and Evelyn, also, could not refuse.

And now, as the crowd gathered round the red ropes, Maltravers had to undergo new exclamations at Evelyn's beauty and Vargrave's luck. Impatiently he turned from the spot, with that gnawing sickness of the heart which none but the jealous know. He longed to depart, yet dreaded to do so. It was the last time he should see Evelyn, perhaps for years; the last time he should see her as Miss Cameron!

He passed into another room, deserted by all save four old gentlemen — Cleveland one of them — immersed in whist; and threw himself upon an ottoman, placed in a recess by the oriel

window. There, half concealed by the draperies, he communed and reasoned with himself. His heart was sad within him; he never felt before *how* deeply and *how* passionately he loved Evelyn; how firmly that love had fastened upon the very core of his heart! Strange, indeed, it was in a girl so young, of whom he had seen but little, — and that little in positions of such quiet and ordinary interest, — to excite a passion so intense in a man who had gone through strong emotions and stern trials! But all love is unaccountable. The solitude in which Maltravers had lived, the absence of all other excitement, perhaps had contributed largely to fan the flame. And his affections had so long slept, and after long sleep the passions wake with such giant strength! He felt now too well that the last rose of life had bloomed for him; it was blighted in its birth, but it could never be replaced. Henceforth, indeed, he should be alone, the hopes of home were gone forever; and the other occupations of mind and soul — literature, pleasure, ambition — were already forsworn at the very age in which by most men they are most indulged!

O Youth! begin not thy career too soon, and let one passion succeed in its due order to another; so that every season of life may have its appropriate pursuit and charm!

The hours waned; still Maltravers stirred not; nor were his meditations disturbed, except by occasional ejaculations from the four old gentlemen, as between each deal they moralized over the caprices of the cards.

At length, close beside him he heard that voice, the lightest sound of which could send the blood rushing through his veins; and from his retreat he saw Caroline and Evelyn, seated close by.

"I beg pardon," said the former, in a low voice, — "I beg pardon, Evelyn, for calling you away; but I longed to tell you. The die is cast. Lord Doltimore has proposed, and I have accepted him! Alas, alas! I half wish I could retract!"

"Dearest Caroline!" said the silver voice of Evelyn, "for Heaven's sake, do not thus wantonly resolve on your own unhappiness! You wrong yourself, Caroline! you do, indeed!

You are not the vain ambitious character you affect to be! Ah, what is it you require? Wealth? Are you not my friend; am I not rich enough for both? Rank? What can it give you to compensate for the misery of a union without love? Pray, forgive me for speaking thus. Do not think me presumptuous, or romantic; but, indeed, indeed, I know from my own heart what yours must undergo!"

Caroline pressed her friend's hand with emotion.

"You are a bad comforter, Evelyn. My mother, my father, will preach a very different doctrine. I am foolish, indeed, to be so sad in obtaining the very object I have sought! Poor Doltimore! he little knows the nature, the feelings of her whom he thinks he has made the happiest of her sex; he little knows—" Caroline paused, turned pale as death, and then went rapidly on, "but you, Evelyn, *you* will meet the same fate; we shall bear it together."

"No! no! do not think so! Where I give my hand, there shall I give my heart."

At this time Maltravers half rose, and sighed audibly.

"Hush!" said Caroline, in alarm. At the same moment, the whist-table broke up, and Cleveland approached Maltravers.

"I am at your service," said he; "I know you will not stay the supper. You will find me in the next room; I am just going to speak to Lord Saxingham." The gallant old gentleman then paid a compliment to the young ladies, and walked away.

"So you too are a deserter from the ballroom!" said Miss Merton to Maltravers as she rose.

"I am not very well; but do not let me frighten you away."

"Oh, no! I hear the music; it is the last quadrille before supper: and here is my fortunate partner looking for me."

"I have been everywhere in search of you," said Lord Doltimore, in an accent of tender reproach: "come, we are almost too late now."

Caroline put her arm into Lord Doltimore's, who hurried her into the ballroom.

Miss Cameron looked irresolute whether or not to follow,

when Maltravers seated himself beside her, and the paleness of his brow, and something that bespoke pain in the compressed lip, went at once to her heart. In her childlike tenderness, she would have given worlds for the sister's privilege of sympathy and soothing. The room was now deserted; they were alone.

The words that he had overheard from Evelyn's lips, "Where I shall give my hand, there shall I give my heart," Maltravers interpreted but in one sense, — "she loved her betrothed;" and strange as it may seem, at that thought, which put the last seal upon his fate, selfish anguish was less felt than deep compassion. So young, so courted, so tempted as she must be—and with such a protector!—the cold, the unsympathizing, the heartless Vargrave! She, too, whose feelings, so warm, ever trembled on her lip and eye. Oh! when she awoke from her dream, and knew whom she had loved, what might be her destiny, what her danger!

"Miss Cameron," said Maltravers, "let me for one moment detain you; I will not trespass long. May I once, and for the last time, assume the austere rights of friendship? I have seen much of life, Miss Cameron, and my experience has been purchased dearly; and harsh and hermit-like as I may have grown, I have not outlived such feelings as you are well formed to excite. Nay,"—and Maltravers smiled sadly—"I am not about to compliment or flatter, I speak not to you as the young to the young; the difference of our years, that takes away sweetness from flattery, leaves still sincerity to friendship. You have inspired me with a deep interest, — deeper than I thought that living beauty could ever rouse in me again! It may be that something in the tone of your voice, your manner, a nameless grace that I cannot define, reminds me of one whom I knew in youth, — one who had not your advantages of education, wealth, birth; but to whom Nature was more kind than Fortune."

He paused a moment; and without looking towards Evelyn, thus renewed, —

"You are entering life under brilliant auspices. Ah, let me hope that the noonday will keep the promise of the dawn!

You are susceptible, imaginative; do not demand too much, or dream too fondly. When you are wedded, do not imagine that wedded life is exempt from its trials and its cares; if you know yourself beloved—and beloved you must be—do not ask from the busy and anxious spirit of man all which Romance promises and Life but rarely yields. And oh!" continued Maltravers, with an absorbing and earnest passion, that poured forth its language with almost breathless rapidity,—"if ever your heart rebels, if ever it be dissatisfied, fly the false sentiment as a sin! Thrown, as from your rank you must be, on a world of a thousand perils, with no guide so constant and so safe as your own innocence, make not that world too dear a friend. Were it possible that your own home ever could be lonely or unhappy, reflect that to woman the unhappiest home is happier than all excitement abroad. You will have a thousand suitors hereafter: believe that the asp lurks under the flatterer's tongue, and resolve, come what may, to be contented with your lot. How many have I known, lovely and pure as you, who have suffered the very affections—the very beauty of their nature—to destroy them! Listen to me as a warner, as a brother, as a pilot who has passed the seas on which your vessel is about to launch. And ever, ever let me know, in whatever lands your name may reach me, that one who has brought back to me all my faith in human excellence, while the idol of our sex, is the glory of her own. Forgive me this strange impertinence; my heart is full, and has overflowed. And now, Miss Cameron—Evelyn Cameron—this is my last offence, and my last farewell!"

He held out his hand, and involuntarily, unknowingly, she clasped it, as if to detain him till she could summon words to reply. Suddenly he heard Lord Vargrave's voice behind. The spell was broken; the next moment Evelyn was alone, and the throng swept into the room towards the banquet, and laughter and gay voices were heard, and Lord Vargrave was again by Evelyn's side!

CHAPTER IV.

To you

This journey is devoted.

Lover's Progress, Act iv. sc. 1.

As Cleveland and Maltravers returned homeward, the latter abruptly checked the cheerful garrulity of his friend. "I have a favour, a great favour to ask of you."

"And what is that?"

"Let us leave Burleigh to-morrow; I care not at what hour; we need go but two or three stages if you are fatigued."

"Most hospitable host! and why?"

"It is torture, it is agony to me, to breathe the air of Burleigh," cried Maltravers, wildly. "Can you not guess my secret? Have I then concealed it so well? I love, I adore Evelyn Cameron, and she is betrothed to — she loves — another!"

Mr. Cleveland was breathless with amaze; Maltravers had indeed so well concealed his secret, and now his emotion was so impetuous, that it startled and alarmed the old man, who had never himself experienced a passion, though he had indulged a sentiment. He sought to console and soothe; but after the first burst of agony, Maltravers recovered himself, and said gently, —

"Let us never return to this subject again: it is right that I should conquer this madness, and conquer it I will! Now you know my weakness, you will indulge it. My cure cannot commence until I can no longer see from my casements the very roof that shelters the affianced bride of another."

"Certainly, then, we will set off to-morrow: my poor friend! is it indeed —"

"Ah, cease," interrupted the proud man; "no compassion, I implore: give me but time and silence, — they are the only remedies."

Before noon the next day, Burleigh was once more deserted by its lord. As the carriage drove through the village, Mrs. Elton saw it from her open window; but her patron, too absorbed at that hour even for benevolence, forgot her existence: and yet so complicated are the webs of fate, that in the breast of that lowly stranger was locked a secret of the most vital moment to Maltravers.

"Where is he going; where is the squire going?" asked Mrs. Elton, anxiously.

"Dear heart!" said the cottager, "they do say he be going for a short time to foren parts. But he will be back at Christmas."

"And at Christmas I may be gone hence forever," muttered the invalid; "but what will that matter to him — to any one?"

At the first stage Maltravers and his friend were detained a short time for the want of horses. Lord Raby's house had been filled with guests on the preceding night, and the stables of this little inn, dignified with the sign of the Raby Arms, and about two miles distant from the great man's place, had been exhausted by numerous claimants returning homeward from Knaresdean. It was a quiet, solitary post-house, and patience, till some jaded horses should return, was the only remedy; the host, assuring the travellers that he expected four horses every moment, invited them within. The morning was cold, and the fire not unacceptable to Mr. Cleveland; so they went into the little parlour. Here they found an elderly gentleman of very prepossessing appearance, who was waiting for the same object. He moved courteously from the fireplace as the travellers entered, and pushed the "B——shire Chronicle" towards Cleveland: Cleveland bowed urbanely. "A cold day, sir; the autumn begins to show itself."

"It is true, sir," answered the old gentleman; "and I feel the cold the more, having just quitted the genial atmosphere of the South."

"Of Italy?"

"No, of England only. I see by this paper (I am not much of a politician) that there is a chance of a dissolution of par-

liament, and that Mr. Maltravers is likely to come forward for this county; are you acquainted with him, sir?"

"A little," said Cleveland, smiling.

"He is a man I am much interested in," said the old gentleman; "and I hope soon to be honoured with his acquaintance."

"Indeed! and you are going into his neighbourhood?" asked Cleveland, looking more attentively at the stranger, and much pleased with a certain simple candour in his countenance and manner.

"Yes, to Merton Rectory."

Maltravers, who had been hitherto stationed by the window, turned round.

"To Merton Rectory?" repeated Cleveland. "You are acquainted with Mr. Merton, then?"

"Not yet; but I know some of his family. However, my visit is rather to a young lady who is staying at the rectory, — Miss Cameron."

Maltravers sighed heavily; and the old gentleman looked at him curiously. "Perhaps, sir, if you know that neighbourhood, you may have seen —"

"Miss Cameron! Certainly; it is an honour not easily forgotten."

The old gentleman looked pleased.

"The dear child!" said he, with a burst of honest affection, and he passed his hand over his eyes. Maltravers drew near to him.

"You know Miss Cameron; you are to be envied, sir," said he.

"I have known her since she was a child; Lady Vargrave is my dearest friend."

"Lady Vargrave must be worthy of such a daughter. Only under the light of a sweet disposition and pure heart could that beautiful nature have been trained and reared."

Maltravers spoke with enthusiasm; and, as if fearful to trust himself more, left the room.

"That gentleman speaks not more warmly than justly," said the old man, with some surprise. "He has a countenance

which, if physiognomy be a true science, declares his praise to be no common compliment; may I inquire his name?"

"Maltravers," replied Cleveland, a little vain of the effect his ex-pupil's name was to produce.

The curate — for it was he — started and changed countenance.

"Maltravers! but he is not about to leave the county?"

"Yes, for a few months."

Here the host entered. Four horses, that had been only fourteen miles, had just re-entered the yard. If Mr. Maltravers could spare two to that gentleman, who had, indeed, pre-engaged them?

"Certainly," said Cleveland; "but be quick."

"And is Lord Vargrave still at Mr. Merton's?" asked the curate, musingly.

"Oh, yes, I believe so. Miss Cameron is to be married to him very shortly, — is it not so?"

"I cannot say," returned Aubrey, rather bewildered. "You know Lord Vargrave, sir?"

"Extremely well!"

"And you think him worthy of Miss Cameron?"

"That is a question for her to answer. But I see the horses are put to. Good-day, sir! Will you tell your fair young friend that you have met an old gentleman who wishes her all happiness; and if she ask you his name, say Cleveland?"

So saying, Mr. Cleveland bowed, and re-entered the carriage. But Maltravers was yet missing. In fact, he returned to the house by the back way, and went once more into the little parlour. It was something to see again one who would so soon see Evelyn!

"If I mistake not," said Maltravers, "you are that Mr. Aubrey on whose virtues I have often heard Miss Cameron delight to linger? Will you believe my regret that our acquaintance is now so brief?"

As Maltravers spoke thus simply, there was in his countenance, his voice, a melancholy sweetness, which greatly conciliated the good curate; and as Aubrey gazed upon his noble

features and lofty mien, he no longer wondered at the fascination he had appeared to exercise over the young Evelyn.

"And may I not hope, Mr. Maltravers," said he, "that before long our acquaintance may be renewed? Could not Miss Cameron," he added, with a smile and a penetrating look, "tempt you into Devonshire?"

Maltravers shook his head, and, muttering something not very audible, quitted the room. The curate heard the whirl of the wheels, and the host entered to inform him that his own carriage was now ready.

"There is something in this," thought Aubrey, "which I do not comprehend. His manner, his trembling voice, bespoke emotions he struggled to conceal. Can Lord Vargrave have gained his point? Is Evelyn, indeed, no longer free?"

CHAPTER V.

*CERTES, c'est un grand cas, Icas,
Que toujours tracas ou fracas
Vous faites d'une ou d'autre sort ;
C'est le diable qui vous emporte!*¹—VOITURE.

LORD VARGRAVE had passed the night of the ball and the following morning at Knaresdean. It was necessary to bring the counsels of the scheming conclave to a full and definite conclusion; and this was at last effected. Their strength numbered, friends and foes alike canvassed and considered, and due account taken of the waverers to be won over, it really did seem, even to the least sanguine, that the Saxingham or Vargrave party was one that might well aspire either to dictate to, or to break up, a government. Nothing now was left to consider but the favourable hour for action. In high spirits, Lord Vargrave returned about the middle of the day to the rectory.

¹ "Certes, it is the fact, Icas, that you are always engaged in tricks or scrapes of some sort or other; it must be the devil that bewitches you."

"So," thought he, as he reclined in his carriage, — "so, in politics, the prospect clears as the sun breaks out. The party I have espoused is one that must be the most durable, for it possesses the greatest property and the most stubborn prejudice — what elements for Party! All that I now require is a sufficient fortune to back my ambition. Nothing can clog my way but these cursed debts, this disreputable want of gold. And yet Evelyn alarms me! Were I younger, or had I not made my position too soon, I would marry her by fraud or by force, — run off with her to Gretna, and make Vulcan minister to Plutus. But this would never do at my years, and with my reputation. A pretty story for the newspapers, d—n them! Well, nothing venture, nothing have; I will brave the hazard! Meanwhile, Doltimore is mine; Caroline will rule him, and I rule her. His vote and his boroughs are something, — his money will be more immediately useful: I must do him the honour to borrow a few thousands, — Caroline must manage that for me. The fool is miserly, though a spendthrift; and looked black when I delicately hinted the other day that I wanted a friend — *id est*, a loan! money and friendship same thing, — distinction without a difference!" Thus cogitating, Vargrave whiled away the minutes till his carriage stopped at Mr. Merton's door.

As he entered the hall he met Caroline, who had just quitted her own room.

"How lucky I am that you have on your bonnet! I long for a walk with you round the lawn."

"And I, too, am glad to see you, Lord Vargrave," said Caroline, putting her arm in his.

"Accept my best congratulations, my own sweet friend," said Vargrave, when they were in the grounds. "You have no idea how happy Doltimore is. He came to Knaresdean yesterday to communicate the news, and his neckcloth was primmer than ever. C'est un bon enfant."

"Ah, how can you talk thus? Do you feel no pain at the thought that — that I am another's?"

"Your heart will be ever mine, — and that is the true fidelity. What else, too, could be done? As for Lord Dolti-

more, we will go shares in him. Come, cheer thee, *m'amie*; I rattle on thus to keep up your spirits. Do not fancy I am happy!"

Caroline let fall a few tears; but beneath the influence of Vargrave's sophistries and flatteries, she gradually recovered her usual hard and worldly tone of mind.

"And where is Evelyn?" asked Vargrave. "Do you know, the little witch seemed to be half mad the night of the ball. Her head was turned; and when she sat next me at supper, she not only answered every question I put to her *à tort et à travers*, but I fancied every moment she was going to burst out crying. Can you tell what was the matter with her?"

"She was grieved to hear that I was to be married to the man I do not love. Ah, Vargrave, she has more heart than you have!"

"But she never fancies that you love me?" asked Lumley, in alarm. "You women are so confoundedly confidential!"

"No, she does not suspect our secret."

"Then I scarcely think your approaching marriage was a sufficient cause for so much distraction."

"Perhaps she may have overheard some of the impertinent whispers about her mother, — 'Who was Lady Vargrave?' and 'What Cameron was Lady Vargrave's first husband?' I overheard a hundred such vulgar questions; and provincial people whisper so loud."

"Ah, that is a very probable solution of the mystery; and for my part, I am almost as much puzzled as any one else can be to know who Lady Vargrave was!"

"Did not your uncle tell you?"

"He told me that she was of no very elevated birth and station, — nothing more; and she herself, with her quiet, say-nothing manner, slips through all my careless questionings like an eel. She is still a beautiful creature, more regularly handsome than even Evelyn; and old Templeton had a very sweet tooth at the back of his head, though he never opened his mouth wide enough to show it."

"She must ever at least have been blameless, to judge by

an air which, even now, is more like that of a child than a matron."

"Yes; she has not much of the widow about her, poor soul! But her education, except in music, has not been very carefully attended to; and she knows about as much of the world as the Bishop of Autun (better known as Prince Talleyrand) knows of the Bible. If she were not so simple, she would be silly; but silliness is never simple, — always cunning; however, there is some cunning in her keeping her past Cameronian Chronicles so close. Perhaps I may know more about her in a short time, for I intend going to C——, where my uncle once lived, in order to see if I can revive under the rose — since peers are only contraband electioneers — his old parliamentary influence in that city: and they may tell me more there than I now know."

"Did the late lord marry at C——?"

"No; in Devonshire. I do not even know if Mrs. Cameron ever was at C——."

"You must be curious to know who the father of your intended wife was?"

"Her father! No; I have no curiosity in that quarter. And, to tell you the truth, I am much too busy about the Present to be raking into that heap of rubbish we call the Past. I fancy that both your good grandmother and that comely old curate of Brook-Green know everything about Lady Vargrave; and, as they esteem her so much, I take it for granted she is *sans tache*."

"How could I be so stupid! *À propos* of the curate, I forgot to tell you that he is here. He arrived about two hours ago, and has been closeted with Evelyn ever since!"

"The deuce! What brought the old man hither?"

"That I know not. Papa received a letter from him yesterday morning, to say that he would be here to-day. Perhaps Lady Vargrave thinks it time for Evelyn to return home."

"What am I to do?" said Vargrave, anxiously. "Dare I yet venture to propose?"

"I am sure it will be in vain, Vargrave. You must prepare for disappointment."

"And ruin," muttered Vargrave, gloomily. "Hark you, Caroline, she may refuse me if she pleases. But I am not a man to be baffled. Have her I will, by one means or another; revenge urges me to it almost as much as ambition. That girl's thread of life has been the dark line in my woof; she has robbed me of fortune, she now thwarts me in my career, she humbles me in my vanity. But, like a hound that has tasted blood, I will run her down, whatever winding she takes."

"Vargrave, you terrify me! Reflect; we do not live in an age when violence —"

"Tush!" interrupted Lumley, with one of those dark looks which at times, though very rarely, swept away all its customary character from that smooth, shrewd countenance. "Tush! We live in an age as favourable to intellect and to energy as ever was painted in romance. I have that faith in fortune and myself that I tell you, with a prophet's voice, that Evelyn shall fulfil the wish of my dying uncle. But the bell summons us back."

On returning to the house, Lord Vargrave's valet gave him a letter which had arrived that morning. It was from Mr. Gustavus Douce, and ran thus: —

FLEET STREET, — 20, 18—.

MY LORD, — It is with the greatest regret that I apprise you, for Self & Co., that we shall not be able in the present state of the Money Market to renew your Lordship's bill for £10,000, due the 28th instant. Respectfully calling your Lordship's attention to the same, I have the honour to be, for Self & Co., my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient and most obliged humble servant,

GUSTAVUS DOUCE.

To the Right Hon. LORD VARGRAVE, etc.

This letter sharpened Lord Vargrave's anxiety and resolve; nay, it seemed almost to sharpen his sharp features as he muttered sundry denunciations on Messrs. Douce and Co., while arranging his neckcloth at the glass.

CHAPTER VI.

Sol. Why, please your honourable lordship, we were talking here and there, — this and that. — *The Stranger.*

AUBREY had been closeted with Evelyn the whole morning; and, simultaneous with his arrival, came to her the news of the departure of Maltravers. It was an intelligence that greatly agitated and unnerved her; and, coupling that event with his solemn words on the previous night, Evelyn asked herself, in wonder, what sentiments she could have inspired in Maltravers. Could he love her, — her, so young, so inferior, so uninformed? Impossible! Alas! alas! for Maltravers! His genius, his gifts, his towering qualities, — all that won the admiration, almost the awe, of Evelyn, — placed him at a distance from her heart! When she asked herself if he loved her, she did not ask, even in that hour, if she loved him. But even the question she did ask, her judgment answered erringly in the negative. Why should he love, and yet fly her? She understood not his high-wrought scruples, his self-deluding belief. Aubrey was more puzzled than enlightened by his conversation with his pupil; only one thing seemed certain, — her delight to return to the cottage and her mother.

Evelyn could not sufficiently recover her composure to mix with the party below; and Aubrey, at the sound of the second dinner-bell, left her to her solitude, and bore her excuses to Mrs. Merton.

"Dear me!" said that worthy lady; "I am so sorry. I thought Miss Cameron looked fatigued at breakfast, and there was something hysterical in her spirits; and I suppose the surprise of your arrival has upset her. Caroline, my dear, you had better go and see what she would like to have taken up to her room, — a little soup and the wing of a chicken."

"My dear," said Mr. Merton, rather pompously, "I think it would be but a proper respect to Miss Cameron, if you yourself accompanied Caroline."

"I assure you," said the curate, alarmed at the avalanche of politeness that threatened poor Evelyn, — "I assure you that Miss Cameron would prefer being left alone at present; as you say, Mrs. Merton, her spirits are rather agitated."

But Mrs. Merton, with a sliding bow, had already quitted the room, and Caroline with her.

"Come back, Sophy! Cecilia, come back!" said Mr. Merton, settling his *jabot*.

"Oh, dear Evy! poor dear Evy! — Evy is ill!" said Sophy; "I may go to Evy? I must go, Papa!"

"No, my dear, you are too noisy; these children are quite spoiled, Mr. Aubrey."

The old man looked at them benevolently, and drew them to his knee; and, while Cissy stroked his long white hair, and Sophy ran on about dear Evy's prettiness and goodness, Lord Vargrave sauntered into the room.

On seeing the curate, his frank face lighted up with surprise and pleasure; he hastened to him, seized him by both hands, expressed the most heartfelt delight at seeing him, inquired tenderly after Lady Vargrave, and, not till he was out of breath, and Mrs. Merton and Caroline returning apprised him of Miss Cameron's indisposition, did his rapture vanish; and, as a moment before he was all joy, so now he was all sorrow.

The dinner passed off dully enough; the children, re-admitted to dessert, made a little relief to all parties; and when they and the two ladies went, Aubrey himself quickly rose to join Evelyn.

"Are you going to Miss Cameron?" said Lord Vargrave; "pray say how unhappy I feel at her illness. I think these grapes — they are very fine — could not hurt her. May I ask you to present them with my best — best and most anxious regards? I shall be so uneasy till you return. Now, Merton (as the door closed on the curate), let's have another bottle of this famous claret! Droll old fellow that, — quite a character!"

"He is a great favourite with Lady Vargrave and Miss Cameron, I believe," said Mr. Merton. "A mere village priest, I suppose; no talent, no energy—or he could not be a curate at that age."

"Very true,—a shrewd remark. The Church is as good a profession as any other for getting on, if a man has anything in him. I shall live to see *you* a bishop!"

Mr. Merton shook his head.

"Yes, I shall; though you have hitherto disdained to exhibit any one of the three orthodox qualifications for a mitre."

"And what are they, my lord?"

"Editing a Greek play, writing a political pamphlet, and apostatizing at the proper moment."

"Ha, ha! your lordship is severe on us."

"Not I; I often wish I had been brought up to the Church,—famous profession, properly understood. By Jupiter, I should have been a capital bishop!"

In his capacity of parson, Mr. Merton tried to look grave; in his capacity of a gentlemanlike, liberal fellow, he gave up the attempt, and laughed pleasantly at the joke of the rising man.

CHAPTER VII.

WILL nothing please you?

What do you think of the Court? — *The Plain Dealer*.

ON one subject Aubrey found no difficulty in ascertaining Evelyn's wishes and condition of mind. The experiment of her visit, so far as Vargrave's hopes were concerned, had utterly failed; she could not contemplate the prospect of his alliance, and she poured out to the curate, frankly and fully, all her desire to effect a release from her engagement. As it was now settled that she should return with Aubrey to Brook-Green, it was indeed necessary to come to the long-delayed

understanding with her betrothed. Yet this was difficult, for he had so little pressed, so distantly alluded to, their engagement, that it was like a forwardness, an indelicacy in Evelyn to forestall the longed-for yet dreaded explanation. This, however, Aubrey took upon himself; and at this promise Evelyn felt as the slave may feel when the chain is stricken off.

At breakfast, Mr. Aubrey communicated to the Mertons Evelyn's intention to return with him to Brook-Green on the following day. Lord Vargrave started, bit his lip, but said nothing.

Not so silent was Mr. Merton.

"Return with you! my dear Mr. Aubrey, just consider; it is impossible! You see Miss Cameron's rank of life, her position, — so very strange; no servants of her own here but her woman, — no carriage even! You would not have her travel in a post-chaise such a long journey! Lord Vargrave, you can never consent to that, I am sure?"

"Were it only as Miss Cameron's *guardian*," said Lord Vargrave, pointedly, "I should certainly object to such a mode of performing such a journey. Perhaps Mr. Aubrey means to perfect the project by taking two outside places on the top of the coach?"

"Pardon me," said the curate, mildly, "but I am not so ignorant of what is due to Miss Cameron as you suppose. Lady Vargrave's carriage, which brought me hither, will be no unsuitable vehicle for Lady Vargrave's daughter; and Miss Cameron is not, I trust, quite so spoiled by all your friendly attentions as to be unable to perform a journey of two days with no other protector than myself."

"I forgot Lady Vargrave's carriage, — or rather I was not aware that you had used it, my dear sir," said Mr. Merton. "But you must not blame us, if we are sorry to lose Miss Cameron so suddenly; I was in hopes that *you* too would stay at least a week with us."

The curate bowed at the rector's condescending politeness; and just as he was about to answer, Mrs. Merton put in, —

"And you see I had set my heart on her being Caroline's bridesmaid."

Caroline turned pale, and glanced at Vargrave, who appeared solely absorbed in breaking toast into his tea, — a delicacy he had never before been known to favour.

There was an awkward pause. The servant opportunely entered with a small parcel of books, a note to Mr. Merton, and that most blessed of all blessed things in the country, — the letter-bag.

"What is this?" said the rector, opening his note, while Mrs. Merton unlocked the bag and dispensed the contents: "Left Burleigh for some months, a day or two sooner than he had expected; excuse French leave-taking; return Miss Merton's books, much obliged; gamekeeper has orders to place the Burleigh preserves at my disposal. So we have lost our neighbour!"

"Did you not know Mr. Maltravers was gone?" said Caroline. "I heard so from Jenkins last night; he accompanies Mr. Cleveland to Paris."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Merton, opening her eyes. "What could take him to Paris?"

"Pleasure, I suppose," answered Caroline. "I'm sure I should rather have wondered what could detain him at Burleigh."

Vargrave was all this while breaking open seals and running his eyes over sundry scrawls with the practised rapidity of the man of business; he came to the last letter. His countenance brightened.

"Royal invitation, or rather command, to Windsor," he cried. "I am afraid I, too, must leave you, this very day."

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Merton; "is that from the king? Do let me see!"

"Not exactly from the king; the same thing though:" and Lord Vargrave, carelessly pushing the gracious communication towards the impatient hand and loyal gaze of Mrs. Merton, carefully put the other letters in his pocket, and walked musingly to the window.

Aubrey seized the opportunity to approach him. "My lord, can I speak with you a few moments?"

"Me! certainly; will you come to my dressing-room?"

CHAPTER VIII.

. . . THERE was never
Poor gentleman had such a sudden fortune.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER : *The Captain*, Act v. sc. 5.

"MY LORD," said the curate, as Vargrave, leaning back in his chair, appeared to examine the shape of his boots, while in reality "his sidelong looks," not "of love," were fixed upon his companion, — "I need scarcely refer to the wish of the late lord, your uncle, relative to Miss Cameron and yourself; nor need I, to one of a generous spirit, add that an engagement could be only so far binding as both the parties whose happiness is concerned should be willing in proper time and season to fulfil it."

"Sir!" said Vargrave, impatiently waving his hand; and, in his irritable surmise of what was to come, losing his habitual self-control, "I know not what all this has to do with you; surely you trespass upon ground sacred to Miss Cameron and myself? Whatever you have to say, let me beg you to come at once to the point."

"My lord, I will obey you. Miss Cameron — and, I may add, with Lady Vargrave's consent — deposes me to say that, although she feels compelled to decline the honour of your lordship's alliance, yet if in any arrangement of the fortune bequeathed to her she could testify to you, my lord, her respect and friendship, it would afford her the most sincere gratification."

Lord Vargrave started.

"Sir," said he, "I know not if I am to thank you for this information, the announcement of which so strangely coincides with your arrival. But allow me to say that there needs no ambassador between Miss Cameron and myself. It is due, sir, to my station, to my relationship, to my character of guardian, to my long and faithful affection, to all considera-

tions which men of the world understand, which men of feeling sympathize with, to receive from Miss Cameron alone the rejection of my suit."

"Unquestionably Miss Cameron will grant your lordship the interview you have a right to seek; but pardon me, I thought it might save you both much pain, if the meeting were prepared by a third person; and on any matter of business, any atonement to your lordship—"

"Atonement! what can atone to me?" exclaimed Vargrave, as he walked to and fro the room in great disorder and excitement. "Can you give me back years of hope and expectancy, —the manhood wasted in a vain dream? Had I not been taught to look to this reward, should I have rejected all occasion—while my youth was not yet all gone, while my heart was not yet all occupied—to form a suitable alliance? Nay, should I have indulged in a high and stirring career, for which my own fortune is by no means qualified? Atonement! atonement! Talk of atonement to boys! Sir, I stand before you a man whose private happiness is blighted, whose public prospects are darkened, life wasted, fortunes ruined, the schemes of an existence built upon one hope, which was lawfully indulged, overthrown; and you talk to me of *atonement*!"

Selfish as the nature of this complaint might be, Aubrey was struck with its justice.

"My lord," said he, a little embarrassed, "I cannot deny that there is truth in much of what you say. Alas! it proves how vain it is for man to calculate on the future; how unhappily your uncle erred in imposing conditions, which the chances of life and the caprices of affection could at any time dissolve! But this is blame that attaches only to the dead: can you blame the living?"

"Sir, I considered myself bound by my uncle's prayer to keep my hand and heart disengaged, that this title—miserable and barren distinction though it be!—might, as he so ardently desired, descend to Evelyn. I had a right to expect similar honour upon her side!"

"Surely, my lord, you, to whom the late lord on his death-bed confided all the motives of his conduct and the secret of

his life, cannot but be aware that, while desirous of promoting your worldly welfare, and uniting in one line his rank and his fortune, your uncle still had Evelyn's happiness at heart as his warmest wish; you must know that, if that happiness were forfeited by a marriage with you, the marriage became but a secondary consideration. Lord Vargrave's will in itself was a proof of this. He did not impose as an absolute condition upon Evelyn her union with yourself; he did not make the forfeiture of her whole wealth the penalty of her rejection of that alliance. By the definite limit of the forfeit, he intimated a distinction between a command and a desire. And surely, when you consider all circumstances, your lordship must think that, what with that forfeit and the estate settled upon the title, your uncle did all that in a worldly point of view equity and even affection could exact from him."

Vargrave smiled bitterly, but said nothing.

"And if this be doubted, I have clearer proof of his intentions. Such was his confidence in Lady Vargrave, that in the letter he addressed to her before his death, and which I now submit to your lordship, you will observe that he not only expressly leaves it to Lady Vargrave's discretion to communicate to Evelyn that history of which she is at present ignorant, but that he also clearly defines the line of conduct he wished to be adopted with respect to Evelyn and yourself. Permit me to point out the passage."

Impatiently Lord Vargrave ran his eye over the letter placed in his hand, till he came to these lines:—

"And if, when she has arrived at the proper age to form a judgment, Evelyn should decide against Lumley's claims, you know that on no account would I sacrifice her happiness; that all I require is, that fair play be given to his pretensions, due indulgence to the scheme I have long had at heart. Let her be brought up to consider him her future husband; let her not be prejudiced against him; let her fairly judge for herself, when the time arrives."

"You see, my lord," said Mr. Aubrey, as he took back the letter, "that this letter bears the same date as your uncle's will. What he desired has been done. Be just, my lord, be

just, and exonerate us all from blame: who can dictate to the affections?"

"And I am to understand that I have no chance, now or hereafter, of obtaining the affections of Evelyn? Surely, at your age, Mr. Aubrey, you cannot encourage the heated romance common to all girls of Evelyn's age. Persons of our rank do not marry like the Corydon and Phyllis of a pastoral. At my years, I never was fool enough to expect that I should inspire a girl of seventeen with what is called a passionate attachment. But happy marriages are based upon suitable circumstances, mutual knowledge and indulgence, respect, esteem. Come, sir, let me hope yet, — let me hope that, on the same day, I may congratulate you on your preference and you may congratulate me upon my marriage."

Vargrave said this with a cheerful and easy smile; and the tone of his voice was that of a man who wished to convey serious meaning in a jesting accent.

Mr. Aubrey, meek as he was, felt the insult of the hinted bribe, and coloured with a resentment no sooner excited than checked. "Excuse me, my lord, I have now said all; the rest had better be left to your ward herself."

"Be it so, sir. I will ask you, then, to convey my request to Evelyn to honour me with a last and parting interview."

Vargrave flung himself on his chair, and Aubrey left him.

CHAPTER IX.

THUS airy Strephon tuned his lyre. — SHENSTONE.

IN his meeting with Evelyn, Vargrave certainly exerted to the utmost all his ability and all his art. He felt that violence, that sarcasm, that selfish complaint would not avail in a man who was not loved, — though they are often admirable cards in the hands of a man who is. As his own heart was

perfectly untouched in the matter, except by rage and disappointment, — feelings which with him never lasted very long, — he could play coolly his losing game. His keen and ready intellect taught him that all he could now expect was to bequeath sentiments of generous compassion and friendly interest; to create a favourable impression, which he might hereafter improve; to reserve, in short, some spot of vantage-ground in the country from which he was to affect to withdraw all his forces. He had known, in his experience of women, which, whether as an actor or a spectator, was large and various — though not among very delicate and refined natures — that a lady often takes a fancy to a suitor *after* she has rejected him; that precisely *because* she has once rejected she ultimately accepts him. And even this chance was, in circumstances so desperate, not to be neglected. He assumed, therefore, the countenance, the postures, and the voice of heart-broken but submissive despair; he affected a nobleness and magnanimity in his grief, which touched Evelyn to the quick, and took her by surprise.

"It is enough," said he, in sad and faltering accents; "quite enough for me to know that you cannot love me, — that I should fail in rendering you happy. Say no more, Evelyn, say no more! Let me spare you, at least, the pain your generous nature must feel in my anguish. I resign all pretensions to your hand; you are free! — may you be happy!"

"Oh, Lord Vargrave! oh, Lumley!" said Evelyn, weeping, and moved by a thousand recollections of early years. "If I could but prove in any other way my grateful sense of your merits, your too partial appreciation of me, my regard for my lost benefactor, then, indeed, nor till then, could I be happy. Oh that this wealth, so little desired by me, had been more at my disposal! but as it is, the day that sees me in possession of it, shall see it placed under your disposition, your control. This is but justice, — common justice to you; you were the nearest relation of the departed. I had no claim on him, — none but affection. Affection! and yet I disobey him!"

There was much in all this that secretly pleased Vargrave; but it only seemed to redouble his grief.

"Talk not thus, my ward, my friend — ah, still my friend," said he, putting his handkerchief to his eyes. "I repine not; I am more than satisfied. Still let me preserve my privilege of guardian, of adviser, — a privilege dearer to me than all the wealth of the Indies!"

Lord Vargrave had some faint suspicion that Legard had created an undue interest in Evelyn's heart; and on this point he delicately and indirectly sought to sound her. Her replies convinced him that if Evelyn had conceived any prepossession for Legard, there had not been time or opportunity to ripen it into deep attachment. Of Maltravers he had no fear. The habitual self-control of that reserved personage deceived him partly; and his low opinion of mankind deceived him still more. For if there had been any love between Maltravers and Evelyn, why should the former not have stood his ground, and declared his suit? Lumley would have "bah'd" and "pish'd" at the thought of any punctilious regard for engagements so easily broken having power either to check passion for beauty, or to restrain self-interest in the chase of an heiress. He had known Maltravers ambitious; and with him, ambition and self-interest meant the same. Thus, by the very *finesse* of his character — while Vargrave ever with the worldly was a keen and almost infallible observer — with natures of a more refined, or a higher order, he always missed the mark by overshooting. Besides, had a suspicion of Maltravers ever crossed him, Caroline's communications would have dispelled it. It was more strange that Caroline should have been blind; nor would she have been so had she been less absorbed in her own schemes and destinies. All her usual penetration had of late settled in self; and an uneasy feeling — half arising from conscientious reluctance to aid Vargrave's objects; half from jealous irritation at the thought of Vargrave's marrying another — had prevented her from seeking any very intimate or confidential communication with Evelyn herself.

The dreaded conference was over; Evelyn parted from Vargrave with the very feelings he had calculated on exciting, — the moment he ceased to be her lover, her old childish regard

for him recommenced. She pitied his dejection, she respected his generosity, she was deeply grateful for his forbearance. But still — still she was free; and her heart bounded within her at the thought.

Meanwhile, Vargrave, after his solemn farewell to Evelyn, retreated again to his own room, where he remained till his post-horses arrived. Then, descending into the drawing-room, he was pleased to find neither Aubrey nor Evelyn there. He knew that much affectation would be thrown away upon Mr. and Mrs. Merton; he thanked them for their hospitality, with grave and brief cordiality, and then turned to Caroline, who stood apart by the window.

"All is up with me at present," he whispered. "I leave you, Caroline, in anticipation of fortune, rank, and prosperity; that is some comfort. For myself, I see only difficulties, embarrassment, and poverty in the future; but I despond of nothing. Hereafter you may serve me, as I have served you. Adieu! — I have been advising Caroline not to spoil Doltimore, Mrs. Merton; he is conceited enough already. Good-by! God bless you all! love to your little girls. Let me know if I can serve you in any way, Merton, — good-by again!" And thus, sentence by sentence, Vargrave talked himself into his carriage. As it drove by the drawing-room windows, he saw Caroline standing motionless where he had left her; he kissed his hand, — her eyes were fixed mournfully on his. Hard, wayward, and worldly as Caroline Merton was, Vargrave was yet not worthy of the affection he had inspired; for she could *feel*, and he could not, — the distinction, perhaps, between the sexes. And there still stood Caroline Merton, recalling the last tones of that indifferent voice, till she felt her hand seized, and turned round to see Lord Doltimore, and smile upon the happy lover, persuaded that he was adored!

BOOK VI.

Πῦρ σοὶ προσόλω, καὶ τὸ σὸν προσκέβομαι. — EURIPIDES : *Andromache*, 214

"I will bring fire to thee — I reckon not of the place."

CHAPTER I.

. . . THIS ancient city,
How wanton sits she amidst Nature's smiles!

. . . Various nations meet,
As in the sea, yet not confined in space,
But streaming freely through the spacious streets. — YOUNG.

. . . His teeth he still did grind,
And grimly gnash, threatening revenge in vain. — SPENSER.

"PARIS is a delightful place, — that is allowed by all. It is delightful to the young, to the gay, to the idle; to the literary lion, who likes to be petted; to the wiser epicure, who indulges a more justifiable appetite. It is delightful to ladies, who wish to live at their ease, and buy beautiful caps; delightful to philanthropists, who wish for listeners to schemes of colonizing the moon; delightful to the haunters of balls and ballets, and little theatres and superb *cafés*, where men with beards of all sizes and shapes scowl at the English, and involve their intellects in the fascinating game of dominos. For these, and for many others, Paris is delightful. I say nothing against it. But, for my own part, I would rather live in a garret in London than in a palace in the *Chaussée d'Antin*. — 'Chacun à son mauvais goût.'

"I don't like the streets, in which I cannot walk but in the kennel; I don't like the shops, that contain nothing except

what's at the window; I don't like the houses, like prisons which look upon a courtyard; I don't like the *beaux jardins*, which grow no plants save a Cupid in plaster; I don't like the wood fires, which demand as many *petits soins* as the women, and which warm no part of one but one's eyelids, I don't like the language, with its strong phrases about nothing, and vibrating like a pendulum between 'rapture' and 'desolation;' I don't like the accent, which one cannot get, without speaking through one's nose; I don't like the eternal fuss and jabber about books without nature, and revolutions without fruit; I have no sympathy with tales that turn on a dead jackass, nor with constitutions that give the ballot to the representatives, and withhold the suffrage from the people; neither have I much faith in that enthusiasm for the *beaux arts*, which shows its produce in execrable music, detestable pictures, abominable sculpture, and a droll something that I believe the *French* call POETRY. Dancing and cookery, — these are the arts the *French* excel in, I grant it; and excellent things they are; but oh, England! oh, Germany! you need not be jealous of your rival!"

These are not the author's remarks, — he disowns them; they were Mr. Cleveland's. He was a prejudiced man; Maltravers was more liberal, but then Maltravers did not pretend to be a wit.

Maltravers had been several weeks in the city of cities, and now he had his apartments in the gloomy but interesting Faubourg St. Germain, all to himself. For Cleveland, having attended eight days at a sale, and having moreover ransacked all the curiosity shops, and shipped off bronzes and cabinets, and Genoese silks and *objets de vertu*, enough to have half furnished Fonthill, had fulfilled his mission, and returned to his villa. Before the old gentleman went, he flattered himself that change of air and scene had already been serviceable to his friend; and that time would work a complete cure upon that commonest of all maladies, — an unrequited passion, or an ill-placed caprice.

Maltravers, indeed, in the habit of conquering, as well as of concealing emotion, vigorously and earnestly strove to de-

throne the image that had usurped his heart. Still vain of his self-command, and still worshipping his favourite virtue of Fortitude and his delusive philosophy of the calm Golden Mean, he would not weakly indulge the passion, while he so sternly fled from its object.

But yet the image of Evelyn pursued, — it haunted him; it came on him unawares, in solitude, in crowds. That smile so cheering, yet so soft, that ever had power to chase away the shadow from his soul; that youthful and luxurious bloom of pure and eloquent thoughts, which was as the blossom of genius before its fruit, bitter as well as sweet, is born; that rare union of quick feeling and serene temper, which forms the very ideal of what we dream of in the mistress, and exact from the wife, — all, even more, far more, than the exquisite form and the delicate graces of the less durable beauty, returned to him, after every struggle with himself; and time only seemed to grave, in deeper if more latent folds of his heart, the ineradicable impression.

Maltravers renewed his acquaintance with some persons not unfamiliar to the reader.

Valerie de Ventadour — how many recollections of the fairer days of life were connected with that name! Precisely as she had never reached to his love, but only excited his fancy (the fancy of twenty-two), had her image always retained a pleasant and grateful hue; it was blended with no deep sorrow, no stern regret, no dark remorse, no haunting shame.

They met again. Madame de Ventadour was still beautiful, and still admired, — perhaps more admired than ever; for to the great, fashion and celebrity bring a second and yet more popular youth. But Maltravers, if rejoiced to see how gently Time had dealt with the fair Frenchwoman, was yet more pleased to read in her fine features a more serene and contented expression than they had formerly worn. Valerie de Ventadour had preceded her younger admirer through the “MYSTERIES OF LIFE;” she had learned the real objects of being; she distinguished between the Actual and the Visionary, the Shadow and the Substance; she had acquired content for the present, and looked with quiet hope towards the future.

Her character was still spotless; or rather, every year of temptation and trial had given it a fairer lustre. Love, that might have ruined, being once subdued, preserved her from all after danger. The first meeting between Maltravers and Valerie was, it is true, one of some embarrassment and reserve: not so the second. They did but once, and that slightly, recur to the past, and from that moment, as by a tacit understanding, true friendship between them dated. Neither felt mortified to see that an illusion had passed away, — they were no longer the same in each other's eyes. Both might be improved, and were so; but the Valerie and the Ernest of Naples were as things dead and gone! Perhaps Valerie's heart was even more reconciled to the cure of its soft and luxurious malady by the renewal of their acquaintance. The mature and experienced reasoner, in whom enthusiasm had undergone its usual change, with the calm brow and commanding aspect of sober manhood, was a being so different from the romantic boy, new to the actual world of civilized toils and pleasures, fresh from the adventures of Eastern wanderings, and full of golden dreams of poetry before it settles into authorship or action! She missed the brilliant errors, the daring aspirations, — even the animated gestures and eager eloquence, — that had interested and enamoured her in the loiterer by the shores of Baiæ, or amidst the tomb-like chambers of Pompeii. For the Maltravers now before her — wiser, better, nobler, even handsomer than of yore (for he was one whom manhood became better than youth) — the Frenchwoman could at any period have felt friendship without danger. It seemed to her, not as it really was, the natural *development*, but the very *contrast*, of the ardent, variable, imaginative boy, by whose side she had gazed at night on the moonlit waters and rosy skies of the soft Parthenope! How does time, after long absence, bring to us such contrasts between the one we remember and the one we see! And what a melancholy mockery does it seem of our own vain hearts, dreaming of impressions never to be changed, and affections that never can grow cool!

And now, as they conversed with all the ease of cordial and guileless friendship, how did Valerie rejoice in secret that

upon that friendship there rested no blot of shame! and that she had not forfeited those consolations for a home without love, which had at last settled into cheerful nor unhallowed resignation, — consolations only to be found in the conscience and the pride!

M. de Ventadour had not altered, except that his nose was longer, and that he now wore a peruque in full curl instead of his own straight hair. But somehow or other — perhaps by the mere charm of custom — he had grown more pleasing in Valerie's eyes; habit had reconciled her to his foibles, deficiencies, and faults; and, by comparison with others, she could better appreciate his good qualities, such as they were, — generosity, good-temper, good-nature, and unbounded indulgence to herself. Husband and wife have so many interests in common, that when they have jogged on through the ups and downs of life a sufficient time, the leash which at first galled often grows easy and familiar; and unless the *temper*, or rather the disposition and the heart, of either be insufferable, what was once a grievous yoke becomes but a companionable tie. And for the rest, Valerie, now that sentiment and fancy were sobered down, could take pleasure in a thousand things which her pining affections once, as it were, overlooked and overshoot. She could feel grateful for all the advantages her station and wealth procured her; she could cull the roses in her reach, without sighing for the amaranths of Elysium.

If the great have more temptations than those of middle life, and if their senses of enjoyment become more easily pampered into a sickly apathy, so at least (if they can once outlive satiety) they have many more resources at their command. There is a great deal of justice in the old line, displeasing though it be to those who think of love in a cottage, "Tis best repenting in a coach and six!" If among the Eupatrids, the Well Born, there is less love in wedlock, less quiet happiness at home, still they are less chained each to each, — they have more independence, both the woman and the man, and occupations and the solace without can be so easily obtained! Madame de Ventadour, in retiring from the mere frivolities of society — from crowded rooms, and the

inane talk and hollow smiles of mere acquaintanceship — became more sensible of the pleasures that her refined and elegant intellect could derive from art and talent, and the communion of friendship. She drew around her the most cultivated minds of her time and country. Her abilities, her wit, and her conversational graces enabled her not only to mix on equal terms with the most eminent, but to amalgamate and blend the varieties of talent into harmony. The same persons, when met elsewhere, seemed to have lost their charm; under Valerie's roof every one breathed a congenial atmosphere. And music and letters, and all that can refine and embellish civilized life, contributed their resources to this gifted and beautiful woman. And thus she found that the *mind* has excitement and occupation, as well as the heart; and, unlike the latter, the culture we bestow upon the first ever yields us its return. We talk of education for the poor, but we forget how much it is needed by the rich. Valerie was a living instance of the advantages to women of knowledge and intellectual resources. By them she had purified her fancy, by them she had conquered discontent, by them she had grown reconciled to life and to her lot! When the heavy heart weighed down the one scale, it was the mind that restored the balance.

The spells of Madame de Ventadour drew Maltravers into this charmed circle of all that was highest, purest, and most gifted in the society of Paris. There he did not meet, as were met in the times of the old *régime*, sparkling abbés intent upon intrigues; or amorous old dowagers, eloquent on Rousseau; or powdered courtiers, uttering epigrams against kings and religions, — straws that foretold the whirlwind. Paul Courier was right! Frenchmen are Frenchmen still; they are full of fine phrases, and their thoughts smell of the theatre; they mistake foil for diamonds, the Grotesque for the Natural, the Exaggerated for the Sublime: but still I say, Paul Courier was right, — there is more honesty now in a single *salon* in Paris than there was in all France in the days of Voltaire. Vast interests and solemn causes are no longer tossed about like shuttlecocks on the battledores of

empty tongues. In the *bouleversement* of Revolutions the French have fallen on their feet!

Meeting men of all parties and all classes, Maltravers was struck with the heightened tone of public morals, the earnest sincerity of feeling which generally pervaded all, as compared with his first recollections of the Parisians. He saw that true elements for national wisdom were at work, though he saw also that there was no country in which their operations would be more liable to disorder, more slow and irregular in their results. The French are like the Israelites in the Wilderness, when, according to a Hebrew tradition, every morning they seemed on the verge of Pisgah, and every evening they were as far from it as ever. But still time rolls on, the pilgrimage draws to its close, and the Canaan must come at last!

At Valerie's house, Maltravers once more met the De Montaignes. It was a painful meeting, for they thought of Cesarini when they met.

It is now time to return to that unhappy man. Cesarini had been removed from England when Maltravers quitted it after Lady Florence's death; and Maltravers had thought it best to acquaint De Montaigne with all the circumstances that had led to his affliction. The pride and the honour of the high-spirited Frenchman were deeply shocked by the tale of fraud and guilt, softened as it was; but the sight of the criminal, his awful punishment, merged every other feeling in compassion. Placed under the care of the most skilful practitioners in Paris, great hopes of Cesarini's recovery had been at first entertained. Nor was it long, indeed, before he appeared entirely restored, so far as the external and superficial tokens of sanity could indicate a cure. He testified complete consciousness of the kindness of his relations, and clear remembrance of the past: but to the incoherent ravings of delirium, an intense melancholy, still more deplorable, succeeded. In this state, however, he became once more the inmate of his brother-in-law's house; and though avoiding all society, except that of Teresa, whose affectionate nature never wearied of its cares, he resumed many of his old occupations. Again he appeared to take delight in desultory and unprofit-

able studies, and in the cultivation of that luxury of solitary men, "the thankless muse." By shunning all topics connected with the gloomy cause of his affliction, and talking rather of the sweet recollections of Italy and childhood than of more recent events, his sister was enabled to soothe the dark hour, and preserve some kind of influence over the ill-fated man. One day, however, there fell into his hands an English newspaper, which was full of the praises of Lord Vargrave; and the article in lauding the peer referred to his services as the commoner Lumley Ferrers.

This incident, slight as it appeared, and perfectly untraceable by his relations, produced a visible effect on Cesarini; and three days afterwards he attempted his own life. The failure of the attempt was followed by the fiercest paroxysms. His disease returned in all its dread force: and it became necessary to place him under yet stricter confinement than he had endured before. Again, about a year from the date now entered upon, he had appeared to recover; and again he was removed to De Montaigne's house. His relations were not aware of the influence which Lord Vargrave's name exercised over Cesarini; in the melancholy tale communicated to them by Maltravers, that name had not been mentioned. If Maltravers had at one time entertained some vague suspicions that Lumley had acted a treacherous part with regard to Florence, those suspicions had long since died away for want of confirmation; nor did he (nor did therefore the De Montaignes) connect Lord Vargrave with the affliction of Cesarini. De Montaigne himself, therefore, one day at dinner, alluding to a question of foreign politics which had been debated that morning in the Chamber, and in which he himself had taken an active part, happened to refer to a speech of Vargrave upon the subject, which had made some sensation abroad, as well as at home. Teresa asked innocently who Lord Vargrave was; and De Montaigne, well acquainted with the biography of the principal English statesmen, replied that he had commenced his career as Mr. Ferrers, and reminded Teresa that they had once been introduced to him in Paris. Cesarini suddenly rose and left the room; his absence was not noted, for

his comings and goings were ever strange and fitful. Teresa soon afterwards quitted the apartment with her children, and De Montaigne, who was rather fatigued by the exertions and excitement of the morning, stretched himself in his chair to enjoy a short *siesta*. He was suddenly awakened by a feeling of pain and suffocation, — awakened in time to struggle against a strong gripe that had fastened itself at his throat. The room was darkened in the growing shades of the evening; and, but for the glittering and savage eyes that were fixed on him, he could scarcely discern his assailant. He at length succeeded, however, in freeing himself, and casting the intended assassin on the ground. He shouted for assistance; and the lights borne by the servants who rushed into the room revealed to him the face of his brother-in-law. Cesarini, though in strong convulsions, still uttered cries and imprecations of revenge; he denounced De Montaigne as a traitor and a murderer! In the dark confusion of his mind, he had mistaken the guardian for the distant foe, whose name sufficed to conjure up the phantoms of the dead, and plunge reason into fury.

It was now clear that there was danger and death in Cesarini's disease. His madness was pronounced to be capable of no certain and permanent cure; he was placed at a new asylum (the superintendents of which were celebrated for humanity as well as skill), a little distance from Versailles, and there he still remained. Recently his lucid intervals had become more frequent and prolonged; but trifles that sprang from his own mind, and which no care could prevent or detect, sufficed to renew his calamity in all its fierceness. At such times he required the most unrelaxing vigilance, for his madness ever took an alarming and ferocious character; and had he been left unshackled, the boldest and stoutest of the keepers would have dreaded to enter his cell unarmed, or alone.

What made the disease of the mind appear more melancholy and confirmed was, that all this time the frame seemed to increase in health and strength. This is not an uncommon case in instances of mania—and it is generally the worst

symptom. In earlier youth, Cesarini had been delicate even to effeminacy; but now his proportions were enlarged, his form, though still lean and spare, muscular and vigorous, — as if in the torpor which usually succeeded to his bursts of frenzy, the animal portion gained by the repose or disorganization of the intellectual. When in his better and calmer mood — in which indeed none but the experienced could have detected his malady — books made his chief delight. But then he complained bitterly, if briefly, of the confinement he endured, of the injustice he suffered; and as, shunning all companions, he walked gloomily amidst the grounds that surrounded that House of Woe, his unseen guardians beheld him clenching his hands, as at some visionary enemy, or overheard him accuse some phantom of his brain of the torments he endured.

Though the reader can detect in Lumley Ferrers the cause of the frenzy, and the object of the imprecation, it was not so with the De Montaignes, nor with the patient's keepers and physicians; for in his delirium he seldom or never gave name to the shadows that he invoked, — not even to that of Florence. It is, indeed, no unusual characteristic of madness to shun, as by a kind of cunning, all mention of the names of those by whom the madness has been caused. It is as if the unfortunates imagined that the madness might be undiscovered if the images connected with it were unbetrayed.

Such, at this time, was the wretched state of the man, whose talents had promised a fair and honourable career, had it not been the wretched tendency of his mind, from boyhood upward, to pamper every unwholesome and unhallowed feeling as a token of the exuberance of genius. De Montaigne, though he touched as lightly as possible upon this dark domestic calamity in his first communications with Maltravers, whose conduct in that melancholy tale of crime and woe had, he conceived, been stamped with generosity and feeling, still betrayed emotions that told how much his peace had been embittered.

"I seek to console Teresa," said he, turning away his manly head, "and to point out all the blessings yet left to her; but

that brother so beloved, from whom so much was so vainly expected, — still ever and ever, though she strives to conceal it from me, this affliction comes back to her, and poisons every thought! Oh, better a thousand times that he had died! When reason, sense, almost the soul, are dead, how dark and fiend-like is the life that remains behind! And if it should be in the blood — if Teresa's children — dreadful thought!"

De Montaigne ceased, thoroughly overcome.

"Do not, my dear friend, so fearfully exaggerate your misfortune, great as it is; Cesarini's disease evidently arose from no physical conformation, — it was but the crisis, the development, of a long-contracted malady of mind, passions morbidly indulged, the reasoning faculty obstinately neglected; and yet too he may recover. The further memory recedes from the shock he has sustained, the better the chance that his mind will regain its tone."

De Montaigne wrung his friend's hand.

"It is strange that from you should come sympathy and comfort! — you whom he so injured; you whom his folly or his crime drove from your proud career, and your native soil! But Providence will yet, I trust, redeem the evil of its erring creature, and I shall yet live to see you restored to hope and home, a happy husband, an honoured citizen. Till then, I feel as if the curse lingered upon my race."

"Speak not thus. Whatever my destiny, I have recovered from that wound; and still, De Montaigne, I find in life that suffering succeeds to suffering, and disappointment to disappointment, as wave to wave. To endure is the only philosophy; to believe that we shall live again in a brighter planet, is the only hope that our reason should accept from our desires."

CHAPTER II.

MONSTRA evererunt mihi :
 Introit in aedes ater alienus canis,
 Anguis per impluvium decedit de tegulis,
 Gallina cecinit !¹ — TERENCE.

WITH his constitutional strength of mind, and conformably with his acquired theories, Maltravers continued to struggle against the latest and strongest passion of his life. It might be seen in the paleness of his brow, and that nameless expression of suffering which betrays itself in the lines about the mouth, that his health was affected by the conflict within him; and many a sudden fit of absence and abstraction, many an impatient sigh, followed by a forced and unnatural gayety, told the observant Valerie that he was the prey of a sorrow he was too proud to disclose. He compelled himself, however, to take, or to affect, an interest in the singular phenomena of the social state around him, — phenomena that, in a happier or serener mood, would indeed have suggested no ordinary food for conjecture and meditation.

The state of *visible transition* is the state of nearly all the enlightened communities in Europe. But nowhere is it so pronounced as in that country which may be called the Heart of European Civilization. There, all to which the spirit of society attaches itself appears broken, vague, and half developed, — the Antique in ruins, and the New not formed. It is, perhaps, the only country in which the Constructive principle has not kept pace with the Destructive. The Has Been is blotted out; the To Be is as the shadow of a far land in a mighty and perturbed sea.²

¹ "Prodigies have occurred — a strange black dog came into the house; a snake glided from the tiles, through the court; the hen crowed."

² The reader will remember that these remarks were written long before the last French Revolution, and when the dynasty of Louis Philippe was generally considered most secure.

Maltravers, who for several years had not examined the progress of modern literature, looked with mingled feelings of surprise, distaste, and occasional and most reluctant admiration, on the various works which the successors of Voltaire and Rousseau have produced, and are pleased to call the offspring of Truth united to Romance.

Profoundly versed in the mechanism and elements of those masterpieces of Germany and England, from which the French have borrowed so largely while pretending to be original, Maltravers was shocked to see the monsters which these Frankenstein's had created from the relics and the offal of the holiest sepulchres. The head of a giant on the limbs of a dwarf, incongruous members jumbled together, parts fair and beautiful, — the whole a hideous distortion!

"It may be possible," said he to De Montaigne, "that these works are admired and extolled; but how they can be vindicated by the examples of Shakspeare and Goethe, or even of Byron, who redeemed poor and melodramatic conceptions with a manly vigour of execution, an energy and completeness of purpose, that Dryden himself never surpassed, is to me utterly inconceivable."

"I allow that there is a strange mixture of fustian and maudlin in all these things," answered De Montaigne; "but they are but the windfalls of trees that may bear rich fruit in due season; meanwhile, any new school is better than eternal imitations of the old. As for critical vindications of the works themselves, the age that produces the phenomena is never the age to classify and analyze them. We have had a deluge, and now new creatures spring from the new soil."

"An excellent simile: they come forth from slime and mud, — fetid and crawling, unformed and monstrous. I grant exceptions; and even in the New School, as it is called, I can admire the real genius, the vital and creative power of Victor Hugo. But oh, that a nation which has known a Corneille should ever spawn forth a ——! And with these rickety and drivelling abortions — all having followers and adulators — your Public can still bear to be told that they have improved wonderfully on the day when they gave laws and models to

the literature of Europe; they can bear to hear — proclaimed a sublime genius in the same circles which sneer down Voltaire!"

Voltaire is out of fashion in France, but Rousseau still maintains his influence, and boasts his imitators. Rousseau was the worse man of the two; perhaps he was also the more dangerous writer. But his reputation is more durable, and sinks deeper into the heart of his nation; and the danger of his unstable and capricious doctrines has passed away. In Voltaire we behold the fate of all writers purely destructive; their uses cease with the evils they denounce. But Rousseau sought to construct as well as to destroy; and though nothing could well be more absurd than his constructions, still man loves to look back and see even delusive images — castles in the air — reared above the waste where cities have been. Rather than leave even a burial-ground to solitude, we populate it with ghosts.

By degrees, however, as he mastered all the features of the French literature, Maltravers become more tolerant of the present defects, and more hopeful of the future results. He saw in one respect that that literature carried with it its own ultimate redemption.

Its general characteristic — contradistinguished from the literature of the old French classic school — is to take the *heart* for its study; to bring the passions and feelings into action, and let the Within have its record and history as well as the Without. In all this our contemplative analyst began to allow that the French were not far wrong when they contended that Shakspeare made the fountain of their inspiration, — a fountain which the majority of our later English Fictionists have neglected. It is not by a story woven of interesting incidents, relieved by delineations of the externals and surface of character, humorous phraseology, and every-day ethics, that Fiction achieves its grandest ends.

In the French literature, thus characterized, there is much false morality, much depraved sentiment, and much hollow rant; but still it carries within it the germ of an excellence, which, sooner or later, must in the progress of national genius

arrive at its full development. Meanwhile, it is a consolation to know that nothing really immoral is ever permanently popular, or ever, therefore, long deleterious; what is dangerous in a work of genius cures itself in a few years. We can now read "Werther," and instruct our hearts by its exposition of weakness and passion, our taste by its exquisite and unrivalled simplicity of construction and detail, without any fear that we shall shoot ourselves in top-boots! We can feel ourselves elevated by the noble sentiments of "The Robbers," and our penetration sharpened as to the wholesale immorality of conventional cant and hypocrisy, without any danger of turning banditti and becoming cutthroats from the love of virtue. Providence, that has made the genius of the few in all times and countries the guide and prophet of the many, and appointed Literature as the sublime agent of Civilization, of Opinion, and of Law, has endowed the elements it employs with a divine power of self-purification. The stream settles of itself by rest and time; the impure particles fly off, or are neutralized by the healthful. It is only fools that call the works of a master-spirit immoral. There does not exist in the literature of the world one *popular* book that is immoral two centuries after it is produced. For, in the heart of nations, the False does not live so long; and the True is the Ethical to the end of time.

From the literary Maltravers turned to the political state of France his curious and thoughtful eye. He was struck by the resemblance which this nation—so civilized, so thoroughly European—bears in one respect to the despotisms of the East: the convulsions of the capital decide the fate of the country; Paris is the tyrant of France. He saw in this inflammable concentration of power, which must ever be pregnant with great evils, one of the causes why the revolutions of that powerful and polished people are so incomplete and unsatisfactory, why, like Cardinal Fleury, system after system, and Government after Government—

. . . "floruit sine fructu,
Defloruit sine luctu."¹

¹ "Flourished without fruit, and was destroyed without regret."

Maltravers regarded it as a singular instance of perverse ratiocination, that, unwarned by experience, the French should still persist in perpetuating this political vice; that all their policy should still be the policy of Centralization, — a principle which secures the momentary strength, but ever ends in the abrupt destruction of States. It is, in fact, the perilous tonic, which seems to brace the system, but drives the blood to the head, — thus come apoplexy and madness. By centralization the provinces are weakened, it is true, — but weak to assist as well as to oppose a government, weak to withstand a mob. Nowhere, nowadays, is a mob so powerful as in Paris: the political history of Paris is the history of mobs. Centralization is an excellent quackery for a despot who desires power to last only his own life, and who has but a life-interest in the State; but to true liberty and permanent order centralization is a deadly poison. The more the provinces govern their own affairs, the more we find everything, even to roads and post-horses, are left to the people; the more the Municipal Spirit pervades every vein of the vast body, the more certain may we be that reform and change must come from universal opinion, which is slow, and constructs ere it destroys, — not from public clamour, which is sudden, and not only pulls down the edifice but sells the bricks!

Another peculiarity in the French Constitution struck and perplexed Maltravers. This people so pervaded by the republican sentiment; this people, who had sacrificed so much for Freedom; this people, who, in the name of Freedom, had perpetrated so much crime with Robespierre, and achieved so much glory with Napoleon, — this people were, *as a people*, contented to be utterly excluded from all power and voice in the State! Out of thirty-three millions of subjects, less than two hundred thousand electors! Where was there ever an oligarchy equal to this? What a strange infatuation, to demolish an aristocracy and yet to exclude a people! What an anomaly in political architecture, to build an inverted pyramid! Where was the safety-valve of governments, where the natural vents of excitement in a population so inflamma-



"'FORGIVE ME,' SAID VARGRAVE, SOOTHINGLY."



ble? The people itself were left a mob, — no stake in the State, no action in its affairs, no legislative interest in its security.¹

On the other hand, it was singular to see how — the aristocracy of birth broken down — the aristocracy of letters had arisen. A Peerage, half composed of journalists, philosophers, and authors! This was the beau-ideal of Algernon Sidney's Aristocratic Republic, of the Helvetian vision of what ought to be the dispensation of public distinctions; yet was it, after all, a desirable aristocracy? Did society gain; did literature lose? Was the priesthood of Genius made more sacred and more pure by these worldly decorations and hollow titles; or was aristocracy itself thus rendered a more disinterested, a more powerful, or a more sagacious element in the administration of law, or the elevation of opinion? These questions, not lightly to be answered, could not fail to arouse the speculation and curiosity of a man who had been familiar with the closet and the forum; and in proportion as he found his interest excited in these problems to be solved by a foreign nation, did the thoughtful Englishman feel the old instinct — which binds the citizen to the fatherland — begin to stir once more earnestly and vividly within him.

"You, yourself individually, are passing like us," said De Montaigne one day to Maltravers, "through a state of transition. You have forever left the Ideal, and you are carrying your cargo of experience over to the Practical. When you reach that haven, you will have completed the development of your forces."

"You mistake me, — I am but a spectator."

"Yes; but you desire to go behind the scenes; and he who once grows familiar with the green-room, longs to be an actor."

With Madame de Ventadour and the De Montaignes Maltravers passed the chief part of his time. They knew how to appreciate his nobler and to love his gentler attributes and qualities; they united in a warm interest for his future fate; they combated his Philosophy of Inaction; and they felt that

¹ Has not all this proved prophetic?

it was because he was not happy that he was not wise. Experience was to him what ignorance had been to Alice. His faculties were chilled and dormant. As affection to those who are unskilled in all things, so is affection to those who despair of all things. The mind of Maltravers was a world without a sun!

CHAPTER III.

CŒLEBS, quid agam? ¹ — HORACE.

IN a room at Fenton's Hotel sat Lord Vargrave and Caroline Lady Doltimore, — two months after the marriage of the latter.

"Doltimore has positively fixed, then, to go abroad on your return from Cornwall?"

"Positively, — to Paris. You can join us at Christmas, I trust?"

"I have no doubt of it; and before then I hope that I shall have arranged certain public matters, which at present harass and absorb me even more than my private affairs."

"You have managed to obtain terms with Mr. Douce, and to delay the repayment of your debt to him?"

"Yes, I hope so, till I touch Miss Cameron's income; which will be mine, I trust, by the time she is eighteen."

"You mean the forfeit money of thirty thousand pounds?"

"Not I; I mean what I said!"

"Can you really imagine she will still accept your hand?"

"With your aid, I do imagine it! Hear me. You must take Evelyn with you to Paris. I have no doubt but that she will be delighted to accompany you; nay, I have paved the way so far. For, of course, as a friend of the family, and guardian to Evelyn, I have maintained a correspondence with Lady Vargrave. She informs me that Evelyn has been unwell

¹ "What shall I do, a bachelor?"

and low-spirited; that she fears Brook-Green is dull for her, etc. I wrote, in reply, to say that the more my ward saw of the world, prior to her accession, when of age, to the position she would occupy in it, the more she would fulfil my late uncle's wishes with respect to her education and so forth. I added that as you were going to Paris, and as you loved her so much, there could not be a better opportunity for her entrance into life under the most favourable auspices. Lady Vargrave's answer to this letter arrived this morning: she will consent to such an arrangement should you propose it."

"But what good will result to yourself in this project? At Paris you will be sure of rivals, and —"

"Caroline," interrupted Lord Vargrave, "I know very well what you would say: I also know all the danger I must incur. But it is a choice of evils, and I choose the least. You see that while she is at Brook-Green, and under the eye of that sly old curate, I can effect nothing with her. There, she is entirely removed from my influence: not so abroad; not so under your roof. Listen to me still further. In this country, and especially in the seclusion and shelter of Brook-Green, I have no scope for any of those means which I shall be compelled to resort to, in failure of all else."

"What can you intend?" said Caroline, with a slight shudder.

"I don't know what I intend yet. But this, at least, I can tell you, — that Miss Cameron's fortune I must and will have. I am a desperate man; and I can play a desperate game, if need be."

"And do you think that *I* will aid, will abet?"

"Hush, not so loud! Yes, Caroline, you will, and you must aid and abet me in any project I may form."

"Must! Lord Vargrave?"

"Ay," said Lumley, with a smile, and sinking his voice into a whisper, — "*ay! you are in my power!*"

"Traitor! — you cannot dare! you cannot mean —"

"I mean nothing more than to remind you of the ties that exist between us, — ties which ought to render us the firmest and most confidential of friends. Come, Caroline, recollect

all the benefit must not lie on one side. I have obtained for you rank and wealth; I have procured you a husband, — you must help me to a wife!”

Caroline sank back, and covered her face with her hands.

“I allow,” continued Vargrave, coldly, — “I allow that your beauty and talent were sufficient of themselves to charm a wiser man than Doltimore; but had I not suppressed jealousy, sacrificed love, had I dropped a hint to your liege lord, — nay, had I not fed his lap-dog vanity by all the cream and sugar of flattering falsehoods, — you would be Caroline Merton still!”

“Oh, would that I were! Oh that I were anything but your tool, your victim! Fool that I was! wretch that I am! I am rightly punished!”

“Forgive me, forgive me, dearest,” said Vargrave, soothingly; “I was to blame, forgive me: but you irritated, you maddened me, by your seeming indifference to my prosperity, my fate. I tell you again and again, pride of my soul, I tell you, that you are the only being I love! and if you will allow me, if you will rise superior, as I once fondly hoped, to all the cant and prejudice of convention and education, the only woman I could ever respect, as well as love. Oh, hereafter, when you see me at that height to which I feel that I am born to climb, let me think that to your generosity, your affection, your zeal, I owed the ascent. At present I am on the precipice; without your hand I fall forever. My own fortune is gone; the miserable forfeit due to me, if Evelyn continues to reject my suit, when she has arrived at the age of eighteen, is deeply mortgaged. I am engaged in vast and daring schemes, in which I may either rise to the highest station or lose that which I now hold. In either case, how necessary to me is wealth: in the one instance, to maintain my advancement; in the other, to redeem my fall.”

“But did you not tell me,” said Caroline, “that Evelyn proposed and promised to place her fortune at your disposal, even while rejecting your hand?”

“Absurd mockery!” exclaimed Vargrave; “the foolish boast of a girl, — an impulse liable to every caprice. Can

you suppose that when she launches into the extravagance natural to her age and necessary to her position, she will not find a thousand demands upon her rent-roll not dreamed of now; a thousand vanities and baubles that will soon erase my poor and hollow claim from her recollection? Can you suppose that, if she marry another, her husband will ever consent to a child's romance? And even were all this possible, were it possible that girls were not extravagant, and that husbands had no common-sense, is it for me, Lord Vargrave, to be a mendicant upon reluctant bounty, — a poor cousin, a pensioned led-captain? Heaven knows I have as little false pride as any man, but still this is a degradation I cannot stoop to. Besides, Caroline, I am no miser, no Harpagon: I do not want wealth for wealth's sake, but for the advantages it bestows, — respect, honour, position; and these I get as the husband of the great heiress. Should I get them as her dependant? No: for more than six years I have built my schemes and shaped my conduct according to one assured and definite object; and that object I shall not now, at the eleventh hour, let slip from my hands. Enough of this: you will pass Brook-Green in returning from Cornwall; you will take Evelyn with you to Paris, — leave the rest to me. Fear no folly, no violence, from my plans, whatever they may be: I work in the dark. Nor do I despair that Evelyn will love, that Evelyn will voluntarily accept me yet: my disposition is sanguine; I look to the bright side of things; do the same!"

Here their conference was interrupted by Lord Doltimore, who lounged carelessly into the room, with his hat on one side. "Ah, Vargrave, how are you? You will not forget the letters of introduction? Where are you going, Caroline?"

"Only to my own room, to put on my bonnet; the carriage will be here in a few minutes." And Caroline escaped.

"So you go to Cornwall to-morrow, Doltimore?"

"Yes; cursed bore! but Lady Elizabeth insists on seeing us, and I don't object to a week's good shooting. The old lady, too, has something to leave, and Caroline had no dowry, — not that I care for it; but still marriage is expensive."

"By the by, you will want the five thousand pounds you lent me?"

"Why, whenever it is convenient."

"Say no more, — it shall be seen to. Doltimore, I am very anxious that Lady Doltimore's *début* at Paris should be brilliant: everything depends on falling into the right set. For myself, I don't care about fashion, and never did; but if I were married, and an idle man like you, it might be different."

"Oh, you will be very useful to us when we return to London. Meanwhile, you know, you have my proxy in the Lords. I dare say there will be some sharp work the first week or two after the recess."

"Very likely; and depend on one thing, my dear Doltimore, that when I am in the Cabinet, a certain friend of mine shall be an earl. Adieu."

"Good-by, my dear Vargrave, good-by; and, I say, — I say, don't distress yourself about that trifle; a few months hence it will suit me just as well."

"Thanks. I will just look into my accounts, and use you without ceremony. Well, I dare say we shall meet at Paris. Oh, I forgot, — I observe that you have renewed your intimacy with Legard. Now, he is a very good fellow, and I gave him that place to oblige you; still, as you are no longer a *garçon* — but perhaps I shall offend you?"

"Not at all. What is there against Legard?"

"Nothing in the world, — but he is a bit of a boaster. I dare say his ancestor was a Gascon, poor fellow! — and he affects to say that you can't choose a coat, or buy a horse, without his approval and advice, — that he can turn you round his finger. Now this hurts your consequence in the world, — you don't get credit for your own excellent sense and taste. Take my advice, avoid these young hangers-on of fashion, these club-room lions. Having no importance of their own, they steal the importance of their friends. *Verbum sap.*"

"You are very right, — Legard is a coxcomb; and now I see why he talked of joining us at Paris."

"Don't let him do any such thing! He will be telling

the Frenchmen that her ladyship is in love with him, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha! — a very good joke — poor Caroline! — very good joke!"

"Well, good-by, once more." And Vargrave closed the door.

"Legard go to Paris — not if Evelyn goes there!" muttered Lumley. "Besides, I want no partner in the little that one can screw out of this blockhead."



CHAPTER IV.

MR. BUMBLECASE, a word with you — I have a little business.

Farewell, the goodly Manor of Blackacre, with all its woods, underwoods, and appurtenances whatever. — WYCHERLEY: *Plain Dealer*.

IN quitting Fenton's Hotel, Lord Vargrave entered into one of the clubs in St. James's Street: this was rather unusual with him, for he was not a club man. It was not his system to spend his time for nothing. But it was a wet December day; the House was not yet assembled, and he had done his official business. Here, as he was munching a biscuit and reading an article in one of the ministerial papers — the heads of which he himself had supplied — Lord Saxingham joined and drew him to the window.

"I have reason to think," said the earl, "that your visit to Windsor did good."

"Ah, indeed; so I fancied."

"I do not think that a certain personage will ever consent to the — question; and the premier, whom I saw to-day, seems chafed and irritated."

"Nothing can be better; I know that we are in the right boat."

"I hope it is not true, Lumley, that your marriage with Miss Cameron is broken off; such was the *on dit* in the club, just before you entered."

"Contradict it, my dear lord, — contradict it. I hope by the spring to introduce Lady Vargrave to you. But who broached the absurd report?"

"Why, your *protégé*, Legard, says he heard so from his uncle, who heard it from Sir John Merton."

"Legard is a puppy, and Sir John Merton a jackass. Legard had better attend to his office, if he wants to get on; and I wish you'd tell him so. I have heard somewhere that he talks of going to Paris, — you can just hint to him that he must give up such idle habits. Public functionaries are not now what they were, — people are expected to work for the money they pocket; otherwise Legard is a cleverish fellow, and deserves promotion. A word or two of caution from you will do him a vast deal of good."

"Be sure I will lecture him. Will you dine with me to-day, Lumley?"

"No. I expect my co-trustee, Mr. Douce, on matters of business, — a *tête-à-tête* dinner."

Lord Vargrave had, as he conceived, very cleverly talked over Mr. Douce into letting his debt to that gentleman run on for the present; and in the meanwhile, he had overwhelmed Mr. Douce with his condescensions. That gentleman had twice dined with Lord Vargrave, and Lord Vargrave had twice dined with him. The occasion of the present more familiar entertainment was in a letter from Mr. Douce, begging to see Lord Vargrave on particular business; and Vargrave, who by no means liked the word *business* from a gentleman to whom he owed money, thought that it would go off more smoothly if sprinkled with champagne.

Accordingly, he begged "My dear Mr. Douce" to excuse ceremony, and dine with him on Thursday at seven o'clock, — he was really so busy all the mornings.

At seven o'clock, Mr. Douce came. The moment he entered Vargrave called out, at the top of his voice, "Dinner immediately!" And as the little man bowed and shuffled,

and fidgeted and wriggled (while Vargrave shook him by the hand), as if he thought he was going himself to be spitted, his host said, "With your leave, we'll postpone the budget till after dinner. It is the fashion nowadays to postpone budgets as long as we can, — eh? Well, and how are all at home? Devilish cold; is it not? So you go to your villa every day? That's what keeps you in such capital health. You know I had a villa too, — though I never had time to go there."

"Ah, yes; I think, I remember, at Ful-Ful-Fulham!" gasped out Mr. Douce. "Your poor uncle's — now Lady Var-Vargrave's jointure-house. So — so —"

"She don't live there!" burst in Vargrave (far too impatient to be polite). "Too cockneyfied for her, — gave it up to me; very pretty place, but d—d expensive. I could not afford it, never went there, and so I have let it to my wine-merchant; the rent just pays his bill. You will taste some of the sofas and tables to-day in his champagne. I don't know how it is, I always fancy my sherry smells like my poor uncle's old leather chair: very odd smell it had, — a kind of respectable smell! I hope you're hungry, — dinner's ready."

Vargrave thus rattled away in order to give the good banker to understand that his affairs were in the most flourishing condition: and he continued to keep up the ball all dinner-time, stopping Mr. Douce's little, miserable, gasping, dancelike mouth, with "a glass of wine, Douce?" or "by the by, Douce," whenever he saw that worthy gentleman about to make the *Æschylean* improvement of a second person in the dialogue.

At length, dinner being fairly over, and the servants withdrawn, Lord Vargrave, knowing that sooner or later Douce would have his say, drew his chair to the fire, put his feet on the fender, and cried, as he tossed off his claret, "Now, DOUCE, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?"

Mr. Douce opened his eyes to their full extent, and then as rapidly closed them; and this operation he continued till, having snuffed them so much that they could by no possibility burn any brighter, he was convinced that he had not misunderstood his lordship.

"Indeed, then," he began, in his most frightened manner, "indeed — I — really, your lordship is very good — I — I wanted to speak to you on business."

"Well, what can I do for you, — some little favour, eh? Snug sinecure for a favourite clerk, or a place in the Stamp-Office for your fat footman — John, I think you call him? You know, my dear Douce, you may command me."

"Oh, indeed, you are all good-good-goodness — but — but —"

Vargrave threw himself back, and shutting his eyes and pursing up his mouth, resolutely suffered Mr. Douce to unbosom himself without interruption. He was considerably relieved to find that the business referred to related only to Miss Cameron.

Mr. Douce having reminded Lord Vargrave, as he had often done before, of the wishes of his uncle, that the greater portion of the money bequeathed to Evelyn should be invested in land, proceeded to say that a most excellent opportunity presented itself for just such a purchase as would have rejoiced the heart of the late lord, — a superb place, in the style of Blickling, — deer-park six miles round, ten thousand acres of land, bringing in a clear eight thousand pounds a year, purchase money only two hundred and forty thousand pounds. The whole estate was, indeed, much larger, — eighteen thousand acres; but then the more distant farms could be sold in different lots, in order to meet the exact sum Miss Cameron's trustees were enabled to invest.

"Well," said Vargrave, "and where is it? My poor uncle was after De Clifford's estate, but the title was not good."

"Oh! this — is much — much — much fi-fi-finer; famous investment — but rather far off — in — in the north, Li-Li-Lisle Court."

"Lisle Court! Why, does not that belong to Colonel Maltravers?"

"Yes. It is, indeed, quite, I may say, a secret — yes — really — a se-se-secret — not in the market yet — not at all — soon snapped up."

"Humph! Has Colonel Maltravers been extravagant?"

"No; but he does not — I hear — or rather Lady — Julia — so I'm told, yes, indeed — does not li-like — going so far, and so they spend the winter in Italy instead. Yes — very odd — very fine place."

Lumley was slightly acquainted with the elder brother of his old friend, — a man who possessed some of Ernest's faults, — very proud, and very exacting, and very fastidious; but all these faults were developed in the ordinary commonplace world, and were not the refined abstractions of his younger brother.

Colonel Maltravers had continued, since he entered the Guards, to be thoroughly the man of fashion, and nothing more. But rich and well-born, and highly connected, and thoroughly *à la mode* as he was, his pride made him uncomfortable in London, while his fastidiousness made him uncomfortable in the country. He was *rather* a great person, but he wanted to be a *very* great person. This he was at Lisle Court; but that did not satisfy him. He wanted not only to be a very great person, but a very great person among very great persons — and squires and parsons bored him. Lady Julia, his wife, was a fine lady, inane and pretty, who saw everything through her husband's eyes. He was quite master *chez lui*, was Colonel Maltravers! He lived a great deal abroad; for on the Continent his large income seemed princely, while his high character, thorough breeding, and personal advantages, which were remarkable, secured him a greater position in foreign courts than at his own. Two things had greatly disgusted him with Lisle Court, — trifles they might be with others, but they were not trifles to Cuthbert Maltravers; in the first place, a man who had been his father's attorney, and who was the very incarnation of coarse unrepellable familiarity, had bought an estate close by the said Lisle Court, and had, *horresco referens*, been made a baronet! Sir Gregory Gubbins took precedence of Colonel Maltravers! He could not ride out but he met Sir Gregory; he could not dine out but he had the pleasure of walking behind Sir Gregory's bright blue coat with its bright brass buttons. In his last visit to Lisle Court, which he had then crowded

with all manner of fine people, he had seen — the very first morning after his arrival — seen from the large window of his state saloon, a great staring white, red, blue, and gilt thing, at the end of the stately avenue planted by Sir Guy Maltravers in honour of the victory over the Spanish armada. He looked in mute surprise, and everybody else looked; and a polite German count, gazing through his eye-glass, said, “Ah! dat is vat you call a vim in your *pays*, — the vim of Colonel Maltravers!”

This “vim” was the pagoda summer-house of Sir Gregory Gubbins, erected in imitation of the Pavilion at Brighton. Colonel Maltravers was miserable: the *vim* haunted him; it seemed ubiquitous; he could not escape it, — it was built on the highest spot in the county. Ride, walk, sit where he would, the *vim* stared at him; and he thought he saw little mandarins shake their round little heads at him. This was one of the great curses of Lisle Court; the other was yet more galling. The owners of Lisle Court had for several generations possessed the dominant interest in the county town. The colonel himself meddled little in politics, and was too fine a gentleman for the drudgery of parliament. He had offered the seat to Ernest, when the latter had commenced his public career; but the result of a communication proved that their political views were dissimilar, and the negotiation dropped without ill-feeling on either side. Subsequently a vacancy occurred; and Lady Julia’s brother (just made a Lord of the Treasury) wished to come into parliament, so the county town was offered to him. Now, the proud commoner had married into the family of a peer as proud as himself, and Colonel Maltravers was always glad whenever he could impress his consequence on his connections by doing them a favour. He wrote to his steward to see that the thing was properly settled, and came down on the nomination-day “to share the triumph and partake the gale.” Guess his indignation, when he found the nephew of Sir Gregory Gubbins was already in the field! The result of the election was that Mr. Augustus Gubbins came in, and that Colonel Maltravers was pelted with cabbage-stalks, and accused of attempting to *sell*

the worthy and independent electors to a government nominee! In shame and disgust, Colonel Maltravers broke up his establishment at Lisle Court, and once more retired to the Continent.

About a week from the date now touched upon, Lady Julia and himself had arrived in London from Vienna; and a new mortification awaited the unfortunate owner of Lisle Court. A railroad company had been established, of which Sir Gregory Gubbins was a principal shareholder; and the speculator, Mr. Augustus Gubbins, one of the "most useful men in the House," had undertaken to carry the bill through parliament. Colonel Maltravers received a letter of portentous size, inclosing the map of the places which this blessed railway was to bisect; and lo! just at the bottom of his park ran a portentous line, which informed him of the sacrifice he was expected to make for the public good, — especially for the good of that very county town, the inhabitants of which had pelted him with cabbage-stalks!

Colonel Maltravers lost all patience. Unacquainted with our wise legislative proceedings, he was not aware that a railway planned is a very different thing from a railway made; and that parliamentary committees are not by any means favourable to schemes for carrying the public through a gentleman's park.

"This country is not to be lived in," said he to Lady Julia; "it gets worse and worse every year. I am sure I never had any comfort in Lisle Court. I've a great mind to sell it."

"Why, indeed, as we have no sons, only daughters, and Ernest is so well provided for," said Lady Julia, "and the place is so far from London, and the neighbourhood is so disagreeable, I think we could do very well without it."

Colonel Maltravers made no answer, but he revolved the *pros* and *cons*; and then he began to think how much it cost him in gamekeepers and carpenters and bailiffs and gardeners and Heaven knows whom besides; and then the pagoda flashed across him; and then the cabbage-stalks, and at last he went to his solicitor.

"You may sell Lisle Court," said he, quietly.

The solicitor dipped his pen in the ink. "The particulars, Colonel?"

"Particulars of Lisle Court! everybody, that is, every gentleman, knows Lisle Court!"

"Price, sir?"

"You know the rents; calculate accordingly. It will be too large a purchase for one individual; sell the outlying woods and farms separately from the rest."

"We must draw up an advertisement, Colonel."

"Advertise Lisle Court! out of the question, sir. I can have no publicity given to my intention: mention it quietly to any capitalist; but keep it out of the papers till it is all settled. In a week or two you will find a purchaser, — the sooner the better."

Besides his horror of newspaper comments and newspaper puffs, Colonel Maltravers dreaded that his brother — then in Paris — should learn his intention, and attempt to thwart it; and, somehow or other, the colonel was a little in awe of Ernest, and a little ashamed of his resolution. He did not know that, by a singular coincidence, Ernest himself had thought of selling Burleigh.

The solicitor was by no means pleased with this way of settling the matter. However, he whispered it about that Lisle Court was in the market; and as it really was one of the most celebrated places of its kind in England, the whisper spread among bankers and brewers and soap-boilers and other rich people — the Medici of the New Noblesse rising up amongst us — till at last it reached the ears of Mr. Douce.

Lord Vargrave, however bad a man he might be, had not many of those vices of character which belong to what I may call the *personal class of vices*, — that is, he had no ill-will to individuals. He was not, ordinarily, a jealous man, nor a spiteful, nor a malignant, nor a vindictive man: his vices arose from utter indifference to all men, and all things — except as conducive to his own ends. He would not have injured a worm if it did him no good; but he would have set any house on fire if he had no other means of roasting his own eggs. Yet still, if any feeling of personal rancour could har-

bour in his breast, it was, first, towards Evelyn Cameron, and, secondly, towards Ernest Maltravers. For the first time in his life, he did long for revenge, — revenge against the one for stealing his patrimony, and refusing his hand; and that revenge he hoped to gratify.

As to the other, it was not so much dislike he felt, as an uneasy sentiment of inferiority. However well he himself had got on in the world, he yet grudged the reputation of a man whom he had remembered a wayward, inexperienced boy: he did not love to hear any one praise Maltravers. He fancied, too, that this feeling was reciprocal, and that Maltravers was pained at hearing of any new step in his own career. In fact, it was that sort of jealousy which men often feel for the companions of their youth, whose characters are higher than their own, and whose talents are of an order they do not quite comprehend. Now, it certainly did seem at that moment to Lord Vargrave that it would be a most splendid triumph over Mr. Maltravers of Burleigh to be lord of Lisle Court, the hereditary seat of the elder branch of the family: to be, as it were, in the very shoes of Mr. Ernest Maltravers's elder brother. He knew, too, that it was a property of great consequence. Lord Vargrave of Lisle Court would hold a very different post in the peerage from Lord Vargrave of —, Fulham! Nobody would call the owner of Lisle Court an adventurer; nobody would suspect such a man of caring three straws about place and salary. And if he married Evelyn, and if Evelyn bought Lisle Court, would not Lisle Court be his? He vaulted over the *if's*, stiff monosyllables *though* they were, with a single jump. Besides, even should the thing come to nothing, there was the very excuse he sought for joining Evelyn at Paris, for conversing with her, consulting her. It was true that the will of the late lord left it solely at the discretion of the trustees to select such landed investment as seemed best to them; but still it was, if not legally necessary, at least but a proper courtesy to consult Evelyn. And plans, and drawings, and explanations, and rent-rolls, would justify him in spending morning after morning alone with her.

Thus cogitating, Lord Vargrave suffered Mr. Douce to stammer out sentence upon sentence, till at length, as he rang for coffee, his lordship stretched himself with the air of a man stretching himself into self-complacency or a good thing, and said, —

“Mr. Douce, I will go down to Lisle Court as soon as I can; I will see it; I will ascertain all about it; I will consider favourably of it. I agree with you, I think it will do famously.”

“But,” said Mr. Douce, who seemed singularly anxious about the matter, “we must make haste, my lord; for really — yes, indeed — if — if — if Baron Roths — Rothschild should — that is to say —”

“Oh, yes, I understand; keep the thing close, my dear Douce; make friends with the colonel’s lawyer; play with him a little, till I can run down.”

“Besides, you see, you are such a good man of business, my lord — that you see, that — yes, really — there must be time to draw out the purchase-money — sell out at a prop — prop —”

“To be sure, to be sure! Bless me, how late it is! I am afraid my carriage is ready. I must go to Madame de L——’s.”

Mr. Douce, who seemed to have much more to say, was forced to keep it for another time, and to take his leave.

Lord Vargrave went to Madame de L——’s. His position in what is called Exclusive Society was rather peculiar. By those who affected to be the best judges, the frankness of his manner and the easy oddity of his conversation were pronounced at variance with the tranquil serenity of thorough breeding. But still he was a great favourite both with fine ladies and dandies. His handsome keen countenance, his talents, his politics, his intrigues, and an animated boldness in his bearing, compensated for his constant violation of all the minutiae of orthodox conventionalism.

At this house he met Colonel Maltravers, and took an opportunity to renew his acquaintance with that gentleman. He then referred, in a confidential whisper, to the communication he had received touching Lisle Court.

"Yes," said the colonel, "I suppose I must sell the place, if I can do so quietly. To be sure, when I first spoke to my lawyer it was in a moment of vexation, on hearing that the — railroad was to go through the park, but I find that I overrated that danger. Still, if you will do me the honour to go and look over the place, you will find very good shooting; and when you come back, you can see if it will suit you. Don't say anything about it when you are there; it is better not to publish my intention all over the county. I shall have Sir Gregory Gubbins offering to buy it if you do!"

"You may depend on my discretion. Have you heard anything of your brother lately?"

"Yes; I fancy he is going to Switzerland. He would soon be in England, if he heard I was going to part with Lisle Court!"

"What, it would vex him so?"

"I fear it would; but he has a nice old place of his own, not half so large, and therefore not half so troublesome as Lisle Court."

"Ay! and he *did* talk of selling that nice old place."

"Selling Burleigh! you surprise me. But really country places in England *are* a bore. I suppose he has his Gubbins as well as myself!"

Here the chief minister of the government adorned by Lord Vargrave's virtues passed by, and Lumley turned to greet him.

The two ministers talked together most affectionately in a close whisper, — so affectionately, that one might have seen, with half an eye, that they hated each other like poison!

CHAPTER V.

INSPICERE tanquam in speculum, in vitas omnium
Jubeo.¹ — TERENCE.

ERNEST MALTRAVERS still lingered at Paris: he gave up all notion of proceeding farther. He was, in fact, tired of travel. But there was another reason that chained him to that "Navel of the Earth," — there is not anywhere a better sounding-board to London rumours than the English *quartier* between the Boulevard des Italiennes and the Tuileries; here, at all events, he should soonest learn the worst: and every day, as he took up the English newspapers, a sick feeling of apprehension and fear came over him. No! till the seal was set upon the bond, till the Rubicon was passed, till Miss Cameron was the wife of Lord Vargrave, he could neither return to the home that was so eloquent with the recollections of Evelyn, nor, by removing farther from England, delay the receipt of an intelligence which he vainly told himself he was prepared to meet.

He continued to seek such distractions from thought as were within his reach; and as his heart was too occupied for pleasures which had, indeed, long since palled, those distractions were of the grave and noble character which it is a prerogative of the intellect to afford to the passions.

De Montaigne was neither a Doctrinaire nor a Republican, — and yet, perhaps, he was a little of both. He was one who thought that the tendency of all European States is towards Democracy; but he by no means looked upon Democracy as a panacea for all legislative evils. He thought that, while a writer should be in advance of his time, a statesman should content himself with marching by its side; that a nation could not be ripened, like an exotic, by artificial means; that it must be developed only by natural influences. He believed

¹ "I bid you look into the lives of all men, as it were into a mirror."

that forms of government are never universal in their effects. Thus, De Montaigne conceived that we were wrong in attaching more importance to legislative than to social reforms. He considered, for instance, that the surest sign of our progressive civilization is in our growing distaste to capital punishments. He believed, not in the ultimate *perfection* of mankind, but in their progressive *perfectibility*. He thought that improvement was indefinite; but he did not place its advance more under Republican than under Monarchical forms. "Provided," he was wont to say, "all our checks to power are of the right kind, it matters little to what hands the power itself is confided."

"Ægina and Athens," said he, "were republics — commercial and maritime — placed under the same sky, surrounded by the same neighbours, and rent by the same struggles between Oligarchy and Democracy. Yet, while one left the world an immortal heirloom of genius, where are the poets, the philosophers, the statesmen of the other? Arrian tells us of republics in India, still supposed to exist by modern investigators; but they are not more productive of liberty of thought, or ferment of intellect, than the principalities. In Italy there were commonwealths as liberal as the Republic of Florence; but they did not produce a Machiavelli or a Dante. What daring thought, what gigantic speculation, what democracy of wisdom and genius, have sprung up amongst the despotisms of Germany! You cannot educate two individuals so as to produce the same results from both; you cannot, by similar constitutions (which are the education of nations) produce the same results from different communities. The proper object of statesmen should be to give every facility to the people to develop themselves, and every facility to philosophy to dispute and discuss as to the ultimate objects to be obtained. But you cannot, as a practical legislator, place your country under a melon-frame: it must grow of its own accord."

I do not say whether or not De Montaigne was wrong! but Maltravers saw at least that he was faithful to his theories; that all his motives were sincere, all his practice pure. He

could not but allow, too, that in his occupations and labours, De Montaigne appeared to feel a sublime enjoyment; that, in linking all the powers of his mind to active and useful objects, De Montaigne was infinitely happier than the Philosophy of Indifference, the scorn of ambition, had made Maltravers. The influence exercised by the large-souled and practical Frenchman over the fate and the history of Maltravers was very peculiar.

De Montaigne had not, apparently and directly, operated upon his friend's outward destinies; but he had done so indirectly, by operating on his mind. Perhaps it was he who had consolidated the first wavering and uncertain impulses of Maltravers towards literary exertion; it was he who had consoled him for the mortifications at the earlier part of his career; and now, perhaps he might serve, in the full vigour of his intellect, permanently to reconcile the Englishman to the claims of life.

There were, indeed, certain conversations which Maltravers held with De Montaigne, the germ and pith of which it is necessary that I should place before the reader, — for I write the inner as well as the outer history of a man; and the great incidents of life are not brought about only by the dramatic agencies of others, but also by our own reasonings and habits of thought. What I am now about to set down may be wearisome, but it is not episodic; and I promise that it shall be the last didactic conversation in the work.

One day Maltravers was relating to De Montaigne all that he had been planning at Burleigh for the improvement of his peasantry, and all his theories respecting Labour-Schools and Poor-rates, when De Montaigne abruptly turned round, and said, —

“You have, then, really found that in your own little village your exertions — exertions not very arduous, not demanding a tenth part of your time — have done practical good?”

“Certainly I think so,” replied Maltravers, in some surprise.

“And yet it was but yesterday that you declared that all the labours of Philosophy and Legislation were labours vain; their benefits equivocal and uncertain; that as the sea, where

it loses in one place, gains in another, so civilization only partially profits us, stealing away one virtue while it yields another, and leaving the large proportions of good and evil eternally the same."

"True; but I never said that man might not relieve individuals by individual exertion: though he cannot by abstract theories — nay, even by practical action in the wide circle — benefit the mass."

"Do you not employ on behalf of individuals the same moral agencies that wise legislation or sound philosophy would adopt towards the multitude? For example, you find that the children of your village are happier, more orderly, more obedient, promise to be wiser and better men in their own station of life, from the new, and, I grant, excellent system of school discipline and teaching that you have established. What you have done in one village, why should not legislation do throughout a kingdom? Again, you find that, by simply holding out hope and emulation to industry, by making stern distinctions between the energetic and the idle, the independent exertion and the pauper-mendicancy, you have found a lever by which you have literally moved and shifted the little world around you. But what is the difference here between the rules of a village lord and the laws of a wise legislature? The moral feelings you have appealed to exist universally, the moral remedies you have practised are as open to legislation as to the individual proprietor."

"Yes; but when you apply to a nation the same principles which regenerate a village, new counterbalancing principles arise. If I give education to my peasants, I send them into the world with advantages *superior* to their fellows, — advantages which, not being common to their class, enable them to *outstrip* their fellows. But if this education were universal to the whole tribe, no man would have an advantage superior to the others; the knowledge they would have acquired being shared by all, would leave all as they now are, hewers of wood and drawers of water: the principle of individual hope, which springs from knowledge, would soon be baffled by the vast competition that *universal* knowledge would pro-

duce. Thus by the universal improvement would be engendered a universal discontent.

"Take a broader view of the subject. Advantages given to the *few* around me — superior wages, lighter toils, a greater sense of the dignity of man — are not productive of any change in society. Give these advantages to the *whole mass* of the labouring classes, and what in the small orbit is the desire of the *individual* to rise becomes in the large circumference the desire of the *class* to rise; hence social restlessness, social change, revolution, and its hazards. For revolutions are produced but by the aspirations of one order, and the resistance of the other. Consequently, legislative improvement differs widely from individual amelioration; the same principle, the same agency, that purifies the small body, becomes destructive when applied to the large one. Apply the flame to the log on the hearth, or apply it to the forest, is there no distinction in the result? The breeze that freshens the fountain passes to the ocean, current impels current, wave urges wave, and the breeze becomes the storm."

"Were there truth in this train of argument," replied De Montaigne, "had we ever abstained from communicating to the Multitude the enjoyments and advantages of the Few, had we shrunk from the good, because the good is a parent of the change and its partial ills, what now would be society? Is there no difference in collective happiness and virtue between the painted Piets and the Druid worship, and the glorious harmony, light, and order of the great English nation?"

"The question is popular," said Maltravers, with a smile; "and were you my opponent in an election, would be cheered on any hustings in the kingdom. But I have lived among savage tribes, — savage, perhaps, as the race that resisted Cæsar; and their happiness seems to me, not perhaps the same as that of the few whose sources of enjoyment are numerous, refined, and, save by their own passions, unalloyed; but equal to that of the mass of men in States the most civilized and advanced. The artisans, crowded together in the fetid air of factories, with physical ills gnawing at the core of the constitution, from the cradle to the grave; drudg-

ing on from dawn to sunset and flying for recreation to the dread excitement of the dram-shop, or the wild and vain hopes of political fanaticism, — are not in my eyes happier than the wild Indians with hardy frames and calm tempers, seasoned to the privations for which you pity them, and uncursed with desires of that better state never to be theirs. The Arab in his desert has seen all the luxuries of the pasha in his harem; but he envies them not. He is contented with his barb, his tent, his desolate sands, and his spring of refreshing water.

“Are we not daily told, do not our priests preach it from their pulpits, that the cottage shelters happiness equal to that within the palace? Yet what the distinction between the peasant and the prince, differing from that between the peasant and the savage? There are more enjoyments and more privations in the one than in the other; but if, in the latter case, the enjoyments, though fewer, be more keenly felt, — if the privations, though apparently sharper, fall upon duller sensibilities and hardier frames, — your gauge of proportion loses all its value. Nay, in civilization there is for the multitude an evil that exists not in the savage state. The poor man sees daily and hourly all the vast disparities produced by civilized society; and reversing the divine parable, it is Lazarus who from afar, and from the despondent pit, looks upon Dives in the lap of Paradise: **therefore**, his privations, his sufferings, are made more keen by comparison with the luxuries of others. Not so in the desert and the forest. There but small distinctions, and those softened by immemorial and hereditary usage — that has **in** it the sanctity of religion — separate the savage from his **chief**. The fact is, that in civilization we behold a splendid aggregate, — literature and science, wealth and luxury, **commerce** and glory; but we see not the million victims crushed beneath the wheels of the machine, — the health sacrificed, the board breadless, the jails filled, the hospitals reeking, the human life poisoned in every spring, and poured forth like water! Neither do we remember all the steps, marked by desolation, crime, and bloodshed, by which this barren summit has been reached. Take the his-

tory of any civilized state, — England, France, Spain before she rotted back into second childhood, the Italian Republics, the Greek Commonwealths, the Empress of the Seven Hills — what struggles, what persecutions, what crimes, what massacres! Where, in the page of history, shall we look back and say, ‘Here improvement has diminished the sum of evil’? Extend, too, your scope beyond the State itself: each State has won its acquisitions by the woes of others. Spain springs above the Old World on the blood-stained ruins of the New; and the groans and the gold of Mexico produce the splendours of the Fifth Charles!

“Behold England, the wise, the liberal, the free England — through what struggles she has passed; and is she yet contented? The sullen oligarchy of the Normans; our own criminal invasions of Scotland and France; the plundered people, the butchered kings; the persecutions of the Lollards; the wars of Lancaster and York; the new dynasty of the Tudors, that at once put back Liberty, and put forward Civilization! the Reformation, cradled in the lap of a hideous despot, and nursed by violence and rapine; the stakes and fires of Mary, and the craftier cruelties of Elizabeth, — England, strengthened by the desolation of Ireland, the Civil Wars, the reign of hypocrisy, followed by the reign of naked vice; the nation that beheaded the graceful Charles gaping idly on the scaffold of the lofty Sidney; the vain Revolution of 1688, which, if a jubilee in England, was a massacre in Ireland; the bootless glories of Marlborough; the organized corruption of Walpole, the frantic war with our own American sons, the exhausting struggles with Napoleon!

“Well, we close the page; we say, Lo! a thousand years of incessant struggles and afflictions! millions have perished, but Art has survived; our boors wear stockings, our women drink tea, our poets read Shakspeare, and our astronomers improve on Newton! Are we now contented? No! more restless than ever. New classes are called into power; new forms of government insisted on. Still the same catch-words, — Liberty here, Religion there; Order with one faction, Amelioration with the other. Where is the goal, and

what have we gained? Books are written, silks are woven, palaces are built, — mighty acquisitions for the few — but the peasant is a peasant still! The crowd are yet at the bottom of the wheel; better off, you say. No, for they are not more contented! The artisan is as anxious for change as ever the serf was; and the steam-engine has its victims as well as the sword.

“Talk of legislation: all isolated laws pave the way to wholesale changes in the form of government! Emancipate Catholics, and you open the door to democratic principle, that Opinion should be free. If free with the sectarian, it should be free with the elector. The Ballot is a corollary from the Catholic Relief-bill. Grant the Ballot, and the new corollary of enlarged suffrage. Suffrage enlarged is divided but by a yielding surface (a circle widening in the waters; from universal suffrage. Universal suffrage is Democracy. Is Democracy better than the aristocratic commonwealth? Look at the Greeks, who knew both forms; are they agreed which is the best? Plato, Thucydides, Xenophon, Aristophanes — the Dreamer, the Historian, the Philosophic Man of Action, the penetrating Wit — have no ideals in Democracy. Algernon Sidney, the martyr of liberty, allows no government to the multitude. Brutus died for a republic, but a republic of Patricians! What form of government is then the best? All dispute, the wisest cannot agree. The many still say ‘a Republic;’ yet, as you yourself will allow, Prussia, the Despotism, does all that Republics do. Yes, but a good despot is a lucky accident; true, but a just and benevolent Republic is as yet a monster equally short-lived. When the People have no other tyrant, their own public opinion becomes one. No secret espionage is more intolerable to a free spirit than the broad glare of the American eye.

“A rural republic is but a patriarchal tribe — no emulation, no glory; peace and stagnation. What Englishman, what Frenchman, would wish to be a Swiss? A commercial republic is but an admirable machine for making money. Is man created for nothing nobler than freighting ships and speculating on silk and sugar? In fact, there is no certain goal in legislation; we go on colonizing Utopia, and fighting phan-

toms in the clouds. Let us content ourselves with injuring no man, and doing good only in our own little sphere. Let us leave States and senates to fill the sieve of the Danaides, and roll up the stone of Sisyphus."

"My dear friend," said De Montaigne, "you have certainly made the most of an argument, which, if granted, would consign government to fools and knaves, and plunge the communities of mankind into the Slough of Despond. But a very commonplace view of the question might suffice to shake your system. Is life, mere animal life, on the whole, a curse or a blessing?"

"The generality of men in all countries," answered Maltravers, "enjoy existence, and apprehend death; were it otherwise, the world had been made by a Fiend, and not a God!"

"Well, then, observe how the progress of society cheats the grave! In great cities, where the effect of civilization must be the most visible, the diminution of mortality in a corresponding ratio with the increase of civilization is most remarkable. In Berlin, from the year 1747 to 1755, the annual mortality was as one to twenty-eight; but from 1816 to 1822, it was as one to thirty-four! You ask what England has gained by her progress in the arts? I will answer you by her bills of mortality. In London, Birmingham, and Liverpool, deaths have decreased in less than a century from one to twenty, to one to forty (precisely one-half!). Again, whenever a community — nay, a single city, decreases in civilization, and in its concomitants, activity and commerce, its mortality instantly increases. But if civilization be favourable to the prolongation of life, must it not be favourable to all that blesses life, — to bodily health, to mental cheerfulness, to the capacities for enjoyment? And how much more grand, how much more sublime, becomes the prospect of gain, if we reflect that, to each life thus called forth, there is a soul, a destiny beyond the grave, multiplied immortalities! What an apology for the continued progress of States! But you say that, however we advance, we continue impatient and dissatisfied: can you really suppose that, because man in every state is discontented with his lot, there is no difference in the

degree and *quality* of his discontent, no distinction between pining for bread and longing for the moon? Desire is implanted within us, as the very principle of existence; the physical desire fills the world, and the moral desire improves it. Where there is desire, there must be discontent: if we are satisfied with all things, desire is extinct. But a certain degree of discontent is not incompatible with happiness, nay, it has happiness of its own; what happiness like hope, — what is hope but desire? The European serf, whose seigneur could command his life, or insist as a right on the chastity of his daughter, desires to better his condition. God has compassion on his state; Providence calls into action the ambition of leaders, the contests of faction, the movement of men's aims and passions: a change passes through society and legislation, and the serf becomes free! He desires still, but what? No longer personal security, no longer the privileges of life and health; but higher wages, greater comforts, easier justice for diminished wrongs. Is there no difference in the quality of that desire? Was one a greater torment than the other is? Rise a scale higher: a new class is created — the Middle Class, — the express creature of Civilization. Behold the burgher and the citizen, and still struggling, still contending, still desiring, and therefore still discontented. But the discontent does not prey upon the springs of life: it is the discontent of *hope*, not *despair*; it calls forth faculties, energies, and passions, in which there is more joy than sorrow. It is this desire which makes the citizen in private life an anxious father, a careful master, an *active*, and therefore not an unhappy, man. You allow that individuals can effect individual good: this very restlessness, this very discontent with the exact place that he occupies, makes the citizen a benefactor in his narrow circle. Commerce, better than Charity, feeds the hungry and clothes the naked. Ambition, better than brute affection, gives education to our children, and teaches them the love of industry, the pride of independence, the respect for others and themselves!

“In other words, a deference to such qualities as can best fit them to get on in the world, and make the most money!”

“Take that view if you will; but the wiser, the more civilized the State, the worse chances for the rogue to get on! There may be some art, some hypocrisy, some avarice, — nay, some hardness of heart, — in paternal example and professional tuition. But what are such sober infirmities to the vices that arise from defiance and despair? Your savage has his virtues, but they are mostly physical, — fortitude, abstinence, patience: mental and moral virtues must be numerous or few, in proportion to the range of ideas and the exigencies of social life. With the savage, therefore, they must be fewer than with civilized men; and they are consequently limited to those simple and rude elements which the safety of his state renders necessary to him. He is usually hospitable; sometimes honest. But vices are necessary to his existence as well as virtues: he is at war with a tribe that may destroy his own; and treachery without scruple, cruelty without remorse, are essential to him; he feels their necessity, and calls them *virtues*! Even the half-civilized man, the Arab whom you praise, imagines he has a necessity for your money; and his robberies become virtues to him. But in civilized States, vices are at least not necessary to the existence of the majority; they are not, therefore, worshipped as virtues. Society unites against them; treachery, robbery, massacre, are not essential to the strength or safety of the community: they exist, it is true, but they are not cultivated, but punished. The thief in St. Giles’s has the virtues of your savage: he is true to his companions, he is brave in danger, he is patient in privation; he practises the virtues necessary to the bonds of his calling and the tacit laws of his vocation. He might have made an admirable savage: but surely the mass of civilized men are better than the thief?”

Maltravers was struck, and paused a little before he replied; and then he shifted his ground. “But at least all our laws, all our efforts, must leave the multitude in every State condemned to a labour that deadens intellect, and a poverty that embitters life.”

“Supposing this were true, still there are multitudes besides *the* multitude. In each State Civilization produces a middle

class, more numerous to-day than the whole peasantry of a thousand years ago. Would Movement and Progress be without their divine uses, even if they limited their effect to the production of such a class? Look also to the effect of art, and refinement, and just laws, in the wealthier and higher classes. See how their very habits of life tend to increase the sum of enjoyment; see the mighty activity that their very luxury, the very frivolity of their pursuits, create! Without an aristocracy, would there have been a middle class? Without a middle class, would there ever have been an interposition between lord and slave? Before commerce produces a middle class, Religion creates one. The Priesthood, whatever its errors, was the curb to Power. But, to return to the multitude, — you say that in all times they are left the same. Is it so? I come to statistics again: I find that not only civilization, but liberty, has a prodigious effect upon human life. It is, as it were, by the instinct of self-preservation that liberty is so passionately desired by the multitude. A negro slave, for instance, dies annually as one to five or six, but a free African in the English service only as one to thirty-five! Freedom is not, therefore, a mere abstract dream, a beautiful name, a Platonic aspiration: it is interwoven with the most practical of all blessings, — life itself! And can you say fairly that by laws labour cannot be lightened and poverty diminished? We have granted already that since there are degrees in discontent, there is a difference between the peasant and the serf: how know you what the peasant a thousand years hence may be? Discontented, you will say, — still discontented. Yes; but if he had not been discontented, he would have been a serf still! Far from quelling this desire to better himself, we ought to hail it as the source of his perpetual progress. That desire to him is often like imagination to the poet, it transports him into the Future —

“*Crura sonant ferro, sed canit inter opus.*”

It is, indeed, the gradual transformation from the desire of Despair to the desire of Hope, that makes the difference between man and man, between misery and bliss.”

"And then comes the crisis. Hope ripens into deeds; the stormy revolution, perhaps the armed despotism; the relapse into the second infancy of States!"

"Can we, with new agencies at our command, new morality, new wisdom, predicate of the Future by the Past? In ancient States, the mass were slaves; civilization and freedom rested with oligarchies; in Athens twenty thousand citizens, four hundred thousand slaves! How easy decline, degeneracy, overthrow in such States, — a handful of soldiers and philosophers without a People! Now we have no longer barriers to the circulation of the blood of States. The absence of slavery, the existence of the Press; the healthful proportions of kingdoms, neither too confined nor too vast, have created new hopes, which history cannot destroy. As a proof, look to all late revolutions: in England the Civil Wars, the Reformation, — in France her awful Saturnalia, her military despotism! Has either nation fallen back? The deluge passes, and, behold, the face of things more glorious than before! Compare the French of to-day with the French of the old *régime*. You are silent; well, and if in all States there is ever some danger of evil in their activity, is that a reason why you are to lie down inactive; why you are to leave the crew to battle for the helm? How much may individuals by the diffusion of their own thoughts in letters or in action regulate the order of vast events, — now prevent, now soften, now animate, now guide! And is a man to whom Providence and Fortune have imparted such prerogatives to stand aloof, because he can neither foresee the Future nor create Perfection? And you talk of no certain and definite goal! How know we that there is a certain and definite goal, even in heaven? How know we that excellence may not be illimitable? Enough that we improve, that we proceed. Seeing in the great design of earth that benevolence is an attribute of the Designer, let us leave the rest to Posterity and to God."

"You have disturbed many of my theories," said Maltravers, candidly; "and I will reflect on our conversation; but, after all, is every man to aspire to influence others; to throw his opinion into the great scales in which human destinies are weighed?"

Private life is not criminal. It is no virtue to write a book, or to make a speech. Perhaps, I should be as well engaged in returning to my country village, looking at my schools, and wrangling with the parish overseers — ”

“Ah,” interrupted the Frenchman, laughing; “if I have driven you to this point, I will go no further. Every state of life has its duties; every man must be himself the judge of what he is most fit for. It is quite enough that he desires to be active, and labours to be useful; that he acknowledges the precept, ‘Never to be weary in well-doing.’ The divine appetite once fostered, let it select its own food. But the man who, after fair trial of his capacities, and with all opportunity for their full development before him, is convinced that he has faculties which private life cannot wholly absorb, must not repine that Human Nature is not perfect, when he refuses even to exercise the gifts he himself possesses.”

Now these arguments have been very tedious; in some places they have been old and trite; in others they may appear too much to appertain to the abstract theory of first principles. Yet from such arguments, *pro* and *con*, unless I greatly mistake, are to be derived corollaries equally practical and sublime, — the virtue of Action, the obligations of Genius, and the philosophy that teaches us to confide in the destinies, and labour in the service, of mankind.

CHAPTER VI.

I’LL tell you presently her very picture;
Stay — yes, it is so — Lelia.

The Captain, Act v. sc. 1.

MALTRAVERS had not shrunk into a system of false philosophy from wayward and sickly dreams, from resolute self-delusion; on the contrary, his errors rested on his convictions: the convictions disturbed, the errors were rudely shaken.

But when his mind began restlessly to turn once more towards the duties of active life; when he recalled all the former drudgeries and toils of political conflict, or the wearing fatigues of literature, with its small enmities, its false friendships, and its meagre and capricious rewards, — ah, then, indeed, he shrank in dismay from the thoughts of the solitude at home! No lips to console in dejection, no heart to sympathize in triumph, no love within to counterbalance the hate without, — and the best of man, his household affections, left to wither away, or to waste themselves on ideal images, or melancholy remembrance.

It may, indeed, be generally remarked (contrary to a common notion), that the men who are most happy at home are the most active abroad. The animal spirits are necessary to healthful action; and dejection and the sense of solitude will turn the stoutest into dreamers. The hermit is the antipodes of the citizen; and no gods animate and inspire us like the Lares.

One evening, after an absence from Paris of nearly a fortnight, at De Montaigne's villa, in the neighbourhood of St. Cloud, Maltravers, who, though he no longer practised the art, was not less fond than heretofore of music, was seated in Madame de Ventadour's box at the Italian Opera; and Valerie, who was above all the woman's jealousy of beauty, was expatiating with great warmth of eulogium upon the charms of a young English lady whom she had met at Lady G——'s the preceding evening.

"She is just my beau-ideal of the true English beauty," said Valerie: "it is not only the exquisite fairness of the complexion, nor the eyes so purely blue, — which the dark lashes relieve from the coldness common to the light eyes of the Scotch and German, — that are so beautifully national, but the simplicity of manner, the unconsciousness of admiration, the mingled modesty and sense of the expression. No, I have seen women more beautiful, but I never saw one more lovely: you are silent; I expected some burst of patriotism in return for my compliment to your countrywoman!"

"But I am so absorbed in that wonderful Pasta —"

"You are no such thing; your thoughts are far away. But can you tell me anything about my fair stranger and her friends? In the first place, there is a Lord Doltimore, whom I knew before — you need say nothing about him; in the next there is his new married bride, handsome, dark — but you are not well!"

"It was the draught from the door; go on, I beseech you, the young lady, the friend, her name?"

"Her name I do not remember; but she was engaged to be married to one of your statesmen, Lord Vargrave; the marriage is broken off — I know not if that be the cause of a certain melancholy in her countenance, — a melancholy I am sure not natural to its Hebe-like expression. But who have just entered the opposite box? Ah, Mr. Maltravers, do look, there is the beautiful English girl!"

And Maltravers raised his eyes, and once more beheld the countenance of Evelyn Cameron!

BOOK VII.

Λύκησις ἀγνώστῳ λόγῳ

ἦλθε. — SOPHOCLES : *Œd. Tyr.* 681.

Words of dark import gave suspicion birth. — POTTER.

CHAPTER I.

Luce. Is the wind there ?
That makes for me.

Isab. Come, I forget a business.
Wit without Money.

LORD VARGRAVE'S travelling-carriage was at his door, and he himself was putting on his greatcoat in his library, when Lord Saxingham entered.

"What! you are going into the country?"

"Yes; I wrote you word, — to see Lisle Court."

"Ay, true; I had forgot. Somehow or other my memory is not so good as it was. But, let me see, Lisle Court is in —shire. Why, you will pass within ten miles of C——."

"C——! Shall I? I am not much versed in the geography of England, — never learned it at school. As for Poland, Kamschatka, Mexico, Madagascar, or any other place as to which knowledge would be *useful*, I have every inch of the way at my finger's end. But *à propos* of C——, it is the town in which my late uncle made his fortune."

"Ah, so it is. I recollect you were to have stood for C——, but gave it up to Staunch; very handsome in you. Have you any interest there still?"

"I think my ward has some tenants, — a street or two, — one called Richard Street, and the other Templeton Place. I

had intended some weeks ago to have gone down there, and seen what interest was still left to our family; but Staunch himself told me that C—— was a sure card.”

“So he thought; but he has been with me this morning in great alarm: he now thinks he shall be thrown out. A Mr. Winsley, who has a great deal of interest there, and was a supporter of his, hangs back on account of the —— question. This is unlucky, as Staunch is quite with *us*; and if he were to rat now it would be most unfortunate.”

“Winsley! Winsley!—my poor uncle’s right-hand man. A great brewer, — always chairman of the Templeton Committee. I know the name, though I never saw the man.”

“If you could take C—— in your way?”

“To be sure. Staunch must not be lost. We cannot throw away a single vote, much more one of such weight, — eighteen stone at the least! I’ll stop at C—— on pretence of seeing after my ward’s houses, and have a quiet conference with Mr. Winsley. Hem! Peers must not interfere in elections, eh? Well, good-by: take care of yourself. I shall be back in a week, I hope, — perhaps less.”

In a minute more Lord Vargrave and Mr. George Frederick Augustus Howard, a slim young gentleman of high birth and connections, but who, having, as a portionless cadet, his own way to make in the world, condescended to be his lordship’s private secretary, were rattling over the streets the first stage to C——.

It was late at night when Lord Vargrave arrived at the head inn of that grave and respectable cathedral city, in which once Richard Templeton, Esq., — saint, banker, and politician, — had exercised his dictatorial sway. “*Sic transit gloria mundi!*” As he warmed his hands by the fire in the large wainscoted apartment into which he was shown, his eye met a full length engraving of his uncle, with a roll of papers in his hand, — meant for a parliamentary bill for the turnpike trusts in the neighbourhood of C——. The sight brought back his recollections of that pious and saturnine relation, and insensibly the minister’s thoughts flew to his death-bed, and to the strange secret which in that last hour he had

revealed to Lumley, — a secret which had done much in deepening Lord Vargrave's contempt for the forms and conventionalities of decorous life. And here it may be mentioned — though in the course of this volume a penetrating reader may have guessed as much — that, whatever that secret, it did not refer expressly or exclusively to the late lord's singular and ill-assorted marriage. Upon that point much was still left obscure to arouse Lumley's curiosity, had he been a man whose curiosity was very vivacious. But on this he felt but little interest. He knew enough to believe that no further information could benefit himself personally; why should he trouble his head with what never would fill his pockets?

An audible yawn from the slim secretary roused Lord Vargrave from his revery.

"I envy you, my young friend," said he, good-humouredly. "It is a pleasure we lose as we grow older, — that of being sleepy. However, 'to bed,' as Lady Macbeth says. Faith, I don't wonder the poor devil of a thane was slow in going to bed with such a tigress. Good-night to you."

CHAPTER II.

*Ma fortune va prendre une face nouvelle.*¹

RACINE. *Androm.*, Act i. sc. 1.

THE next morning Vargrave inquired the way to Mr. Winsley's, and walked alone to the house of the brewer. The slim secretary went to inspect the cathedral.

Mr. Winsley was a little, thickset man, with a civil but blunt electioneering manner. He started when he heard Lord Vargrave's name, and bowed with great stiffness. Vargrave saw at a glance that there was some cause of grudge in the

¹ "My fortune is about to take a turn."

mind of the worthy man; nor did Mr. Winsley long hesitate before he cleansed his bosom of its perilous stuff.

"This is an unexpected honour, my lord: I don't know how to account for it."

"Why, Mr. Winsley, your friendship with my late uncle can, perhaps, sufficiently explain and apologize for a visit from a nephew sincerely attached to his memory."

"Humph! I certainly did do all in my power to promote Mr. Templeton's interests. No man, I may say, did more; and yet I don't think it was much thought of the moment he turned his back upon the electors of C——. Not that I bear any malice; I am well to do, and value no man's favour, — no man's, my lord!"

"You amaze me! I always heard my poor uncle speak of you in the highest terms."

"Oh, well, it don't signify; pray say no more of it. Can I offer your lordship a glass of wine?"

"No, I am much obliged to you; but we really must set this little matter right. You know that after his marriage my uncle never revisited C——; and that shortly before his death he sold the greater part of his interest in this city. His young wife, I suppose, liked the neighbourhood of London; and when elderly gentlemen *do* marry, you know they are no longer their own masters; but if you had ever come to Fulham — ah! then, indeed, my uncle would have rejoiced to see his old friend."

"Your lordship thinks so," said Mr. Winsley with a sardonic smile. "You are mistaken; I did call at Fulham; and though I sent in my card, Lord Vargrave's servant (he was then My Lord) brought back word that his lordship was not at home."

"But that must have been true; he was out, you may depend on it."

"I saw him at the window, my lord," said Mr. Winsley, taking a pinch of snuff.

"Oh, the deuce! I'm in for it," thought Lumley. — "Very strange, indeed! but how can you account for it? Ah, perhaps the health of Lady Vargrave — she was so very delicate

then, and my poor uncle lived for her — you know that he left all his fortune to Miss Cameron?"

"Miss Cameron! Who is she, my lord?"

"Why, his daughter-in-law; Lady Vargrave was a widow, — a Mrs. Cameron."

"Mrs. Cam — I remember now, — they put Cameron in the newspapers; but I thought it was a mistake. But, perhaps" (added Winsley, with a sneer of peculiar malignity), — "perhaps, when your worthy uncle thought of being a peer, he did not like to have it known that he married so much beneath him."

"You quite mistake, my dear sir; my uncle never denied that Mrs. Cameron was a lady of no fortune or connections, — widow to some poor Scotch gentleman, who died I think in India."

"He left her very ill off, poor thing; but she had a great deal of merit, and worked hard; she taught my girls to play —"

"Your girls! did Mrs. Cameron ever reside in C——?"

"To be sure; but she was then called Mrs. Butler — just as pretty a name to my fancy."

"You must make a mistake: my uncle married this lady in Devonshire."

"Very possibly," quoth the brewer, doggedly. "Mrs. Butler left the town with her little girl some time before Mr. Templeton married."

"Well, you are wiser than I am," said Lumley, forcing a smile. "But how can you be sure that Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Cameron are one and the same person? You did not go into the house, you could not have seen Lady Vargrave" (and here Lumley shrewdly guessed — if the tale were true — at the cause of his uncle's exclusion of his old acquaintance).

"No! but I saw her ladyship on the lawn," said Mr. Winsley, with another sardonic smile; "and I asked the porter at the lodge as I went out if that was Lady Vargrave, and he said, 'yes.' However, my lord, bygones are bygones, — I bear no malice; your uncle was a good man: and if he had but said to me, 'Winsley, don't say a word about Mrs.

Butler,' he might have reckoned on me just as much as when in his elections he used to put five thousand pounds in my hands, and say, 'Winsley, no bribery, — it is wicked; let this be given in charity.' Did any one ever know how that money went? Was your uncle ever accused of corruption? But, my lord, surely you will take some refreshment?"

"No, indeed; but if you will let me dine with you to-morrow, you'll oblige me much; and, whatever my uncle's faults (and latterly, poor man, he was hardly in his senses; what a will he made!) let not the nephew suffer for them. Come, Mr. Winsley," and Lumley held out his hand with enchanting frankness, "you know my motives are disinterested; I have no parliamentary interest to serve, we have no constituents for our Hospital of Incurables; and — oh! that's right, — we're friends, I see! Now I must go and look after my ward's houses. Let me see, the agent's name is — is —"

"Perkins, I think, my lord," said Mr. Winsley, thoroughly softened by the charm of Vargrave's words and manner. "Let me put on my hat, and show you his house."

"Will you? That's very kind; give me all the election news by the way — you know I was once within an ace of being your member."

Vargrave learned from his new friend some further particulars relative to Mrs. Butler's humble habits and homely mode of life at C——, which served completely to explain to him why his proud and worldly uncle had so carefully abstained from all intercourse with that city, and had prevented the nephew from standing for its vacant representation. It seemed, however, that Winsley — whose resentment was not of a very active or violent kind — had not communicated the discovery he had made to his fellow townspeople; but had contented himself with hints and aphorisms, whenever he had heard the subject of Mr. Templeton's marriage discussed, which had led the gossips of the place to imagine that he had made a much worse selection than he really had. As to the accuracy of Winsley's assertion, Vargrave, though surprised at first, had but little doubt on consideration, especially when he heard that Mrs. Butler's principal patroness had been the Mrs.

Leslie, now the intimate friend of Lady Vargrave. But what had been the career, what the earlier condition and struggles of this simple and interesting creature? With her appearance at C——, commenced all that surmise could invent. Not greater was the mystery that wrapped the apparition of Manco Capac by the lake Titiaea, than that which shrouded the places and the trials whence the lowly teacher of music had emerged amidst the streets of C——.

Weary, and somewhat careless, of conjecture, Lord Vargrave, in dining with Mr. Winsley, turned the conversation upon the business on which he had principally undertaken his journey, — namely, the meditated purchase of Lisle Court.

“I myself am not a very good judge of landed property,” said Vargrave; “I wish I knew of an experienced surveyor to look over the farms and timber: can you help me to such a one?”

Mr. Winsley smiled, and glanced at a rosy-cheeked young lady, who simpered and turned away. “I think my daughter could recommend one to your lordship, if she dared.”

“Oh, Pa!”

“I see. Well, Miss Winsley, I will take no recommendation but yours.”

Miss Winsley made an effort.

“Indeed, my lord, I have always heard Mr. Robert Hobbs considered very clever in his profession.”

“Mr. Robert Hobbs is my man! His good health — and a fair wife to him.”

Miss Winsley glanced at Mamma, and then at a younger sister; and then there was a titter, and then a fluttering, and then a rising, and Mr. Winsley, Lord Vargrave, and the slim secretary were left alone.

“Really, my lord,” said the host, resettling himself, and pushing the wine, “though you have guessed our little family arrangement, and I have some interest in the recommendation, since Margaret will be Mrs. Robert Hobbs in a few weeks, yet I do not know a more acute, intelligent young man anywhere. Highly respectable, with an independent fortune; his father is lately dead, and made at least thirty thousand

pounds in trade. His brother Edward is also dead; so he has the bulk of the property, and he follows his profession merely for amusement. He would consider it a great honour."

"And where does he live?"

"Oh, not in this county, — a long way off; close to —; but it is all in your lordship's road. A very nice house he has, too. I have known his family since I was a boy; it is astonishing how his father improved the place, — it was a poor little lath-and-plaster cottage when the late Mr. Hobbs bought it, and it is now a very excellent family house."

"Well, you shall give me the address and a letter of introduction, and so much for that matter. But to return to politics;" and here Lord Vargrave ran eloquently on, till Mr. Winsley thought him the only man in the world who could save the country from that utter annihilation, the possibility of which he had never even suspected before.

It may be as well to add, that, on wishing Lord Vargrave good-night, Mr. Winsley whispered in his ear, "Your lordship's friend, Lord Staunch, need be under no apprehension, — we are all right!"

CHAPTER III.

THIS is the house, sir. — *Love's Pilgrimage*, Act iv. sc. 2.

Redeunt Saturnia regna.¹ — VIRGIL.

THE next morning, Lumley and his slender companion were rolling rapidly over the same road on which, sixteen years ago, way-worn and weary, Alice Darvil had first met with Mrs. Leslie; they were talking about a new opera-dancer as they whirled by the very spot.

¹ "A former state of things returns."

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, the next day, when the carriage stopped at a cast-iron gate, on which was inscribed this epigraph, "Hobbs' lodge — Ring the Bell."

"A snug place enough," said Lord Vargrave, as they were waiting the arrival of the footman to unbar the gate.

"Yes," said Mr. Howard. "If a retired Cit could be transformed into a house, such is the house he would be."

Poor Dale Cottage, — the home of Poetry and Passion! But change visits the Commonplace as well as the Romantic. Since Alice had pressed to that cold grating her wistful eyes, time had wrought his allotted revolutions; the old had died, the young grown up. Of the children playing on the lawn, death had claimed some; and marriage others, — and the holiday of youth was gone for all.

The servant opened the gate. Mr. Robert Hobbs *was* at home; he had friends with him, — he was engaged; Lord Vargrave sent in his card, and the introductory letter from Mr. Winsley. In two seconds, these missives brought to the gate Mr. Robert Hobbs himself, a smart young man, with a black stock, red whiskers, and an eye-glass pendant to a hair-chain which was possibly a *gage d'amour* from Miss Margaret Winsley.

A profusion of bows, compliments, apologies, etc., the carriage drove up the sweep, and Lord Vargrave descended, and was immediately ushered into Mr. Hobbs's private room. The slim secretary followed, and sat silent, melancholy, and upright, while the peer affably explained his wants and wishes to the surveyor.

Mr. Hobbs was well acquainted with the locality of Lisle Court, which was little more than thirty miles distant; he should be proud to accompany Lord Vargrave thither the next morning. But, might he venture, might he dare, might he presume — a gentleman who lived at the town of — was to dine with him that day; a gentleman of the most profound knowledge of agricultural affairs; a gentleman who knew every farm, almost every acre, belonging to Colonel Maltravers; if his lordship could be induced to waive ceremony, and dine with Mr. Hobbs, it might be really useful to meet

this gentleman. The slim secretary, who was very hungry, and who thought he sniffed an uncommonly savoury smell, looked up from his boots. Lord Vargrave smiled.

"My young friend here is too great an admirer of Mrs. Hobbs—who is to be—not to feel anxious to make the acquaintance of any member of the family she is to enter."

Mr. George Frederick Augustus Howard blushed indignant refutation of the calumnious charge. Vargrave continued, —

"As for me, I shall be delighted to meet any friends of yours, and am greatly obliged for your consideration. We may dismiss the postboys, Howard; and what time shall we summon them, — ten o'clock?"

"If your lordship would condescend to accept a bed, we can accommodate your lordship and this gentleman, and start at any hour in the morning that —"

"So be it," interrupted Vargrave. "You speak like a man of business. Howard, be so kind as to order the horses for six o'clock to-morrow. We'll breakfast at Lisle Court."

This matter settled, Lord Vargrave and Mr. Howard were shown into their respective apartments. Travelling dresses were changed, the dinner put back, and the fish over-boiled; but what mattered common fish, when Mr. Hobbs had just caught such a big one? Of what consequence he should be henceforth and ever! A peer, a minister, a stranger to the county, — to come all this way to consult *him*! to be *his* guest! to be shown off, and patted, and trotted out before all the rest of the company! Mr. Hobbs was a made man! Careless of all this, ever at home with any one, and delighted, perhaps, to escape a *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Howard in a strange inn, Vargrave lounged into the drawing-room, and was formally presented to the expectant family and the famishing guests.

During the expiring bachelorship of Mr. Robert Hobbs, his sister, Mrs. Tiddy (to whom the reader was first introduced as a bride gathering the wisdom of economy and large joints from the frugal lips of her mamma), officiated as lady of the house, — a comely matron, and well-preserved, — except that she had lost a front tooth, — in a jaundiced satinet gown, with

a fall of British blonde, and a tucker of the same, Mr. Tiddy being a starch man, and not willing that the luxuriant charms of Mrs. T. should be too temptingly exposed! There was also Mr. Tiddy, whom his wife had married for love, and who was now well to do, — a fine-looking man, with large whiskers, and a Roman nose, a little awry. Moreover, there was a Miss Biddy or Bridget Hobbs, a young lady of four or five and twenty, who was considering whether she might ask Lord Vargrave to write something in her album, and who cast a bashful look of admiration at the slim secretary, as he now sauntered into the room, in a black coat, black waistcoat, black trousers, and a black neckcloth, with a black pin, — looking much like an ebony cane split half-way up. Miss Biddy was a fair young lady, a *leetle* faded, with uncommonly thin arms and white satin shoes, on which the slim secretary cast his eyes and — shuddered!

In addition to the family group were the Rector of —, an agreeable man, who published sermons and poetry; also Sir William Jekyll, who was employing Mr. Hobbs to make a map of an estate he had just purchased; also two country squires and their two wives; moreover, the physician of the neighbouring town, — a remarkably tall man, who wore spectacles and told anecdotes; and, lastly, Mr. Onslow, the gentleman to whom Mr. Hobbs had referred, — an elderly man of prepossessing exterior, of high repute as the most efficient magistrate, the best farmer, and the most sensible person in the neighbourhood. This made the party, to each individual of which the great man bowed and smiled; and the great man's secretary bent, condescendingly, three joints of his backbone.

The bell was now rung, dinner announced. Sir William Jekyll led the way with one of the she-squires, and Lord Vargrave offered his arm to the portly Mrs. Tiddy.

Vargrave, as usual, was the life of the feast. Mr. Howard, who sat next to Miss Bridget, conversed with her between the courses, "in dumb show." Mr. Onslow and the physician played second and third to Lord Vargrave. When the dinner was over, and the ladies had retired, Vargrave found

himself seated next to Mr. Onslow, and discovered in his neighbour a most agreeable companion. They talked principally about Lisle Court, and from Colonel Maltravers the conversation turned naturally upon Ernest. Vargrave proclaimed his early intimacy with the latter gentleman, complained, feelingly, that politics had divided them of late, and told two or three anecdotes of their youthful adventures in the East. Mr. Onslow listened to him with much attention.

"I made the acquaintance of Mr. Maltravers many years ago," said he, "and upon a very delicate occasion. I was greatly interested in him; I never saw one so young (for he was then but a boy) manifest feelings so deep. By the dates you have referred to, your acquaintance with him must have commenced very shortly after mine. Was he at that time cheerful, in good spirits?"

"No, indeed; hypochondriacal to the greatest degree."

"Your lordship's intimacy with him, and the confidence that generally exists between young men, induce me to suppose that he may have told you a little romance connected with his early years."

Lumley paused to consider; and this conversation, which had been carried on apart, was suddenly broken into by the tall doctor, who wanted to know whether his lordship had ever heard the anecdote about Lord Thurlow and the late king. The anecdote was as long as the doctor himself; and when it was over, the gentlemen adjourned to the drawing-room, and all conversation was immediately drowned by "Row, brothers, row," which had only been suspended till the arrival of Mr. Tiddy, who had a fine bass voice.

Alas! eighteen years ago, in that spot of earth, Alice Darvil had first caught the soul of music from the lips of Genius and of Love! But better as it is, — less romantic, but more proper, — as Hobbs' Lodge was less pretty, but more safe from the winds and rains, than Dale Cottage.

Miss Bridget ventured to ask the good-humoured Lord Vargrave if he sang. "Not I, Miss Hobbs; but Howard, there! — ah, if you heard *him*!" The consequence of this hint was, that the unhappy secretary, who, alone, in a distant corner,

was unconsciously refreshing his fancy with some cool weak coffee, was instantly beset with applications from Miss Bridget, Mrs. Tiddy, Mr. Tiddy, and the tall doctor, to favour the company with a specimen of his talents. Mr. Howard could sing, — he could even play the guitar. But to sing at Hobbs' Lodge, to sing to the accompaniment of Mrs. Tiddy, to have his gentle tenor crushed to death in a glee by the heavy splayfoot of Mr. Tiddy's manly bass — the thought was insufferable! He faltered forth assurances of his ignorance, and hastened to bury his resentment in the retirement of a remote sofa. Vargrave, who had forgotten the significant question of Mr. Onslow, renewed in a whisper his conversation with that gentleman relative to the meditated investment, while Mr. and Mrs. Tiddy sang "Come dwell with me;" and Onslow was so pleased with his new acquaintance, that he volunteered to make a fourth in Lumley's carriage the next morning, and accompany him to Lisle Court. This settled, the party soon afterwards broke up. At midnight Lord Vargrave was fast asleep; and Mr. Howard, tossing restlessly to and fro on his melancholy couch, was revolving all the hardships that await a native of St. James's, who ventures forth among —

"The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders!"

CHAPTER IV.

BUT how were these doubts to be changed into absolute certainty?

EDGAR HUNTLEY.

THE next morning, while it was yet dark, Lord Vargrave's carriage picked up Mr. Onslow at the door of a large old-fashioned house, at the entrance of the manufacturing town of —. The party were silent and sleepy till they arrived at Lisle Court. The sun had then appeared, the morning was

clear, the air frosty and bracing; and as, after traversing a noble park, a superb quadrangular pile of brick flanked by huge square turrets coped with stone broke upon the gaze of Lord Vargrave, his worldly heart swelled within him, and the image of Evelyn became inexpressibly lovely and seductive.

Though the housekeeper was not prepared for Vargrave's arrival at so early an hour, yet he had been daily expected: the logs soon burned bright in the ample hearth of the breakfast-room; the urn hissed, the cutlets smoked; and while the rest of the party gathered round the fire, and unmuffled themselves of cloaks and shawl-handkerchiefs, Vargrave seized upon the housekeeper, traversed with delighted steps the magnificent suite of rooms, gazed on the pictures, admired the state bed-chambers, peeped into the offices, and recognized in all a mansion worthy of a Peer of England, — but which a more prudent man would have thought, with a sigh, required careful management of the rent-roll raised from the property adequately to equip and maintain. Such an idea did not cross the mind of Vargrave; he only thought how much he should be honoured and envied, when, as Secretary of State, he should yearly fill those feudal chambers with the pride and rank of England! It was characteristic of the extraordinary sanguineness and self-confidence of Vargrave, that he entirely overlooked one slight obstacle to this prospect, in the determined refusal of Evelyn to accept that passionate homage which he offered to — her fortune!

When breakfast was over the steward was called in, and the party, mounted upon ponies, set out to reconnoitre. After spending the short day most agreeably in looking over the gardens, pleasure-grounds, park, and home-farm, and settling to visit the more distant parts of the property the next day, the party were returning home to dine, when Vargrave's eye caught the glittering *whim* of Sir Gregory Gubbins.

He pointed it out to Mr. Onslow, and laughed much at hearing of the annoyance it occasioned to Colonel Maltravers. "Thus," said Lumley, "do we all crumple the rose-leaf under us, and quarrel with couches the most luxuriant! As for me,

I will wager, that were this property mine, or my ward's, in three weeks we should have won the heart of Sir Gregory, made him pull down his *whim*, and coaxed him out of his interest in the city of —. A good seat for you, Howard, some day or other."

"Sir Gregory has prodigiously bad taste," said Mr. Hobbs. "For my part, I think that there ought to be a certain modest simplicity in the display of wealth got in business, — that was my poor father's maxim."

"Ah!" said Vargrave, "Hobbs' Lodge is a specimen. Who was your predecessor in that charming retreat?"

"Why, the place — then called Dale Cottage — belonged to a Mr. Berners, a rich bachelor in business, who was rich enough not to mind what people said of him, and kept a lady there. She ran off from him, and he then let it to some young man — a stranger, very eccentric, I hear — a Mr. — Mr. Butler — and he, too, gave the cottage an unlawful attraction, — a most beautiful girl, I have heard."

"Butler!" echoed Vargrave, — "Butler! Butler!" Lumley recollected that such had been the real name of Mrs. Cameron.

Onslow looked hard at Vargrave.

"You recognize the name, my lord," said he in a whisper, as Hobbs had turned to address himself to Mr. Howard. "I thought you very discreet when I asked you, last night, if you remembered the early follies of your friend." A suspicion at once flashed upon the quick mind of Vargrave: Butler was a name on the mother's side in the family of Maltravers; the gloom of Ernest when he first knew him, the boy's hints that the gloom was connected with the affections, the extraordinary and single accomplishment of Lady Vargrave in that art of which Maltravers was so consummate a master, the similarity of name, — all taken in conjunction with the meaning question of Mr. Onslow, were enough to suggest to Vargrave that he might be on the verge of a family secret, the knowledge of which could be turned to advantage. He took care not to confess his ignorance, but artfully proceeded to draw out Mr. Onslow's communications.

"Why, it is true," said he, "that Maltravers and I had no

secrets. Ah, we were wild fellows then! The name of Butler is in his family, eh?"

"It is. I see you know all."

"Yes; he told me the story, but it is eighteen years ago. Do refresh my memory. Howard, my good fellow, just ride on and expedite dinner: Mr. Hobbs, will you go with Mr. What's-his-name, the steward, and look over the maps, outgoings, etc.? Now, Mr. Onslow — so Maltravers took the cottage, and a lady with it? — ay, I remember."

Mr. Onslow (who was in fact that magistrate to whom Ernest had confided his name and committed the search after Alice, and who was really anxious to know if any tidings of the poor girl had ever been ascertained) here related that history with which the reader is acquainted, — the robbery of the cottage, the disappearance of Alice, the suspicions that connected that disappearance with her ruffian father, the despair and search of Maltravers. He added that Ernest, both before his departure from England, and on his return, had written to him to learn if Alice had ever been heard of; the replies of the magistrate were unsatisfactory. "And do you think, my lord, that Mr. Maltravers has never to this day ascertained what became of the poor young woman?"

"Why, let me see, — what was her name?"

The magistrate thought a moment, and replied, "Alice Darvil."

"Alice!" exclaimed Vargrave. "Alice!" — aware that such was the Christian name of his uncle's wife, and now almost convinced of the truth of his first vague suspicion.

"You seem to know the name?"

"Of Alice; yes — but not Darvil. No, no; I believe he has never heard of the girl to this hour. Nor you either?"

"I have not. One little circumstance related to me by Mr. Hobbs, your surveyor's father, gave me some uneasiness. About two years after the young woman disappeared, a girl, of very humble dress and appearance, stopped at the gate of Hobbs' Lodge, and asked earnestly for Mr. Butler. On hearing he was gone, she turned away, and was seen no more. It seems that this girl had an infant in her arms — which rather

shocked the propriety of Mr. and Mrs. Hobbs. The old gentleman told me the circumstance a few days after it happened, and I caused inquiry to be made for the stranger; but she could not be discovered. I thought at first this possibly might be the lost Alice; but I learned that, during his stay at the cottage, your friend — despite his error, which we will not stop to excuse — had exercised so generous and wide a charity amongst the poor in the town and neighbourhood, that it was a more probable supposition of the two that the girl belonged to some family he had formerly relieved, and her visit was that of a mendicant, not a mistress. Accordingly, after much consideration, I resolved not to mention the circumstances to Mr. Maltravers, when he wrote to me on his return from the Continent. A considerable time had then elapsed since the girl had applied to Mr. Hobbs; all trace of her was lost; the incident might open wounds that time must have nearly healed, might give false hopes — or, what was worse, occasion a fresh and unfounded remorse at the idea of Alice's destitution; it would, in fact, do no good, and might occasion unnecessary pain. I therefore suppressed all mention of it."

"You did right: and so the poor girl had an infant in her arms? — humph! What sort of looking person was this Alice Darvil, — pretty, of course?"

"I never saw her; and none but the persons employed in the premises knew her by sight; they described her as remarkably lovely."

"Fair and slight, with blue eyes, I suppose? — those are the orthodox requisites of a heroine."

"Upon my word I forget; indeed I should never have remembered as much as I do, if the celebrity of Mr. Maltravers, and the consequence of his family in these parts, together with the sight of his own agony — the most painful I ever witnessed — had not served to impress the whole affair very deeply on my mind."

"Was the girl who appeared at the gate of Hobbs' Lodge described to you?"

"No; they scarcely observed her countenance, except that

her complexion was too fair for a gypsy's; yet, now I think of it, Mrs. Tiddy, who was with her father when he told me the adventure, dwelt particularly on her having (as you so pleasantly conjecture) fair hair and blue eyes. Mrs. Tiddy, being just married, was romantic at that day."

"Well, it is an odd tale; but life is full of odd tales. Here we are at the house; it really is a splendid old place!"

CHAPTER V.

PENDENT opera interrupta.¹—VIRGIL.

THE history Vargrave had heard he revolved much when he retired to rest. He could not but allow that there was still little ground for more than conjecture that Alice Darvil and Alice Lady Vargrave were one and the same person. It might, however, be of great importance to him to trace this conjecture to certainty. The knowledge of a secret of early sin and degradation in one so pure, so spotless, as Lady Vargrave, might be of immense service in giving him a power over her, which he could turn to account with Evelyn. How could he best prosecute further inquiry,—by repairing at once to Brook-Green, or—the thought struck him—by visiting and "pumping" Mrs. Leslie, the patroness of Mrs. Butler, of C——, the friend of Lady Vargrave? It was worth trying the latter,—it was little out of his way back to London. His success in picking the brains of Mr. Onslow of a secret encouraged him in the hope of equal success with Mrs. Leslie. He decided accordingly, and fell asleep to dream of Christmas *battues*, royal visitors, the Cabinet, the premiership! Well, no possession equals the dream of it! Sleep on, my lord! you would be restless enough if you were to get all you want.

¹ "The things begun are interrupted and suspended."

For the next three days, Lord Vargrave was employed in examining the general outlines of the estate; and the result of this survey satisfied him as to the expediency of the purchase. On the third day, he was several miles from the house when a heavy rain came on. Lord Vargrave was constitutionally hardy, and not having been much exposed to visitations of the weather of late years, was not practically aware that when a man is past forty, he cannot endure with impunity all that falls innocuously on the elasticity of twenty-six. He did not, therefore, heed the rain that drenched him to the skin, and neglected to change his dress till he had finished reading some letters and newspapers which awaited his return at Lisle Court. The consequence of this imprudence was, that the next morning when he woke, Lord Vargrave found himself, for almost the first time in his life, seriously ill. His head ached violently, cold shiverings shook his frame like an ague; the very strength of the constitution on which the fever had begun to fasten itself augmented its danger. Lumley — the last man in the world to think of the possibility of dying — fought up against his own sensations, ordered his post-horses, as his visit of survey was now over, and scarcely even alluded to his indisposition. About an hour before he set off, his letters arrived; one of these informed him that Caroline, accompanied by Evelyn, had already arrived in Paris; the other was from Colonel Legard, respectfully resigning his office, on the ground of an accession of fortune by the sudden death of the admiral, and his intention to spend the ensuing year in a Continental excursion. This last letter occasioned Vargrave considerable alarm; he had always felt a deep jealousy of the handsome ex-guardsmen, and he at once suspected that Legard was about to repair to Paris as his rival. He sighed, and looked round the spacious apartment, and gazed on the wide prospects of grove and turf that extended from the window, and said to himself, "Is another to snatch these from my grasp?" His impatience to visit Mrs. Leslie, to gain ascendancy over Lady Vargrave, to repair to Paris, to scheme, to manœuvre, to triumph, accelerated the progress of the disease that was

now burning in his veins; and the hand that he held out to Mr. Hobbs, as he stepped into his carriage, almost scorched the cold, plump, moist fingers of the surveyor. Before six o'clock in the evening Lord Vargrave confessed reluctantly to himself that he was too ill to proceed much farther. "Howard," said he then, breaking a silence that had lasted some hours, "don't be alarmed; I feel that I am about to have a severe attack; I shall stop at M—— (naming a large town they were approaching); I shall send for the best physician the place affords; if I am delirious to-morrow, or unable to give my own orders, have the kindness to send express for Dr. Holland, — but don't leave me yourself, my good fellow. At my age, it is a hard thing to have no one in the world to care for me in illness; d—n affection when I am well!"

After this strange burst, which very much frightened Mr. Howard, Lumley relapsed into silence, not broken till he reached M——. The best physician was sent for; and the next morning, as he had half foreseen and foretold, Lord Vargrave *was* delirious!

CHAPTER VI.

NOTHING under Heaven so strongly doth allure

The sense of man, and all his mind possess,

As Beauty's love-bait. — SPENSER.

LEGARD was, as I have before intimated, a young man of generous and excellent dispositions, though somewhat spoiled by the tenor of his education, and the gay and reckless society which had administered tonics to his vanity and opiates to his intellect. The effect which the beauty, the grace, the innocence of Evelyn had produced upon him had been most deep and most salutary. It had rendered dissipation tasteless and insipid; it had made him look more deeply into his own heart, and into the rules of life. Though, partly from the

irksomeness of dependence upon an uncle at once generous and ungracious, partly from a diffident and feeling sense of his own inadequate pretensions to the hand of Miss Cameron, and partly from the prior and acknowledged claims of Lord Vargrave, he had accepted, half in despair, the appointment offered to him, he still found it impossible to banish that image which had been the first to engrave upon ardent and fresh affections an indelible impression. He secretly chafed at the thought that it was to a fortunate rival that he owed the independence and the station he had acquired, and resolved to seize an early opportunity to free himself from obligations that he deeply regretted he had incurred. At length he learned that Lord Vargrave had been refused, — that Evelyn was free; and within a few days from that intelligence, the admiral was seized with apoplexy; and Legard suddenly found himself possessed, if not of wealth, at least of a competence sufficient to redeem his character as a suitor from the suspicion attached to a fortune-hunter and adventurer. Despite the new prospects opened to him by the death of his uncle, and despite the surly caprice which had mingled with and alloyed the old admiral's kindness, Legard was greatly shocked by his death; and his grateful and gentle nature was at first only sensible to grief for the loss he had sustained. But when, at last, recovering from his sorrow, he saw Evelyn disengaged and free, and himself in a position honourably to contest her hand, he could not resist the sweet and passionate hopes that broke upon him. He resigned, as we have seen, his official appointment, and set out for Paris. He reached that city a day or two after the arrival of Lord and Lady Doltimore. He found the former, who had not forgotten the cautions of Vargrave, at first cold and distant; but partly from the indolent habit of submitting to Legard's dictates on matters of taste, partly from a liking to his society, and principally from the popular suffrages of fashion, which had always been accorded to Legard, and which were nowadays diminished by the news of his accession of fortune, Lord Doltimore, weak and vain, speedily yielded to the influences of his old associate, and Legard became quietly installed as

the *enfant de la maison*. Caroline was not in this instance a very faithful ally to Vargrave's views and policy. In his singular *liaison* with Lady Doltimore, the crafty manœuvrer had committed the vulgar fault of intriguers: he had over-refined and had overreached himself. At the commencement of their strange and unprincipled intimacy, Vargrave had had, perhaps, no other thought than that of piquing Evelyn, consoling his vanity, amusing his *ennui*, and indulging rather his propensities as a gallant than promoting his more serious objects as a man of the world. By degrees, and especially at Knaresdean, Vargrave himself became deeply entangled by an affair that he had never before contemplated as more important than a passing diversion; instead of securing a friend to assist him in his designs on Evelyn, he suddenly found that he had obtained a mistress anxious for his love and jealous of his homage. With his usual promptitude and self-confidence, he was led at once to deliver himself of all the ill-consequences of his rashness, — to get rid of Caroline as a mistress, and to retain her as a tool, by marrying her to Lord Doltimore. By the great ascendancy which his character acquired over her, and by her own worldly ambition, he succeeded in inducing her to sacrifice all romance to a union that gave her rank and fortune; and Vargrave then rested satisfied that the clever wife would not only secure him a permanent power over the political influence and private fortune of the weak husband, but also abet his designs in securing an alliance equally desirable for himself. Here it was that Vargrave's incapacity to understand the refinements and scruples of a woman's affection and nature, however guilty the one, and however worldly the other, foiled and deceived him. Caroline, though the wife of another, could not contemplate without anguish a similar bondage for her lover; and having something of the better qualities of her sex still left to her, she recoiled from being an accomplice in arts that were to drive the young, inexperienced, and guileless creature who called her "friend" into the arms of a man who openly avowed the most mercenary motives, and who took gods and men to witness that his heart was sacred to another. Only in Vargrave's presence were

these scruples overmastered; but the moment he was gone they returned in full force. She had yielded, from positive fear, to his commands that she should convey Evelyn to Paris; but she trembled to think of the vague hints and dark menaces that Vargrave had let fall as to ulterior proceedings, and was distracted at the thought of being implicated in some villanous or rash design. When, therefore, the man whose rivalry Vargrave most feared was almost established at her house, she made but a feeble resistance; she thought that, if Legard should become a welcome and accepted suitor before Lumley arrived, the latter would be forced to forego whatever hopes he yet cherished, and that she should be delivered from a dilemma, the prospect of which daunted and appalled her. Added to this, Caroline was now, alas! sensible that a fool is not so easily governed; her resistance to an intimacy with Legard would have been of little avail; Doltimore, in these matters, had an obstinate will of his own; and, whatever might once have been Caroline's influence over her liege, certain it is that such influence had been greatly impaired of late by the indulgence of a temper, always irritable, and now daily more soured by regret, remorse, contempt for her husband, — and the melancholy discovery that fortune, youth, beauty, and station are no talismans against misery.

It was the gayest season of Paris; and to escape from herself, Caroline plunged eagerly into the vortex of its dissipation. If Doltimore's heart was disappointed, his vanity was pleased at the admiration Caroline excited; and he himself was of an age and temper to share in the pursuits and amusements of his wife. Into these gayeties, new to their fascination, dazzled by their splendour, the young Evelyn entered with her hostess; and ever by her side was the unequalled form of Legard. Each of them in the bloom of youth, each of them at once formed to please, and to be pleased by that fair Armida which we call the World, there was, necessarily, a certain congeniality in their views and sentiments, their occupations and their objects; nor was there, in all that brilliant city, one more calculated to captivate the eye and fancy than George Legard. But still, to a certain degree diffident

and fearful, Legard never yet spoke of love; nor did their intimacy at this time ripen to that point in which Evelyn could have asked herself if there were danger in the society of Legard, or serious meaning in his obvious admiration. Whether that melancholy, to which Lady Vargrave had alluded in her correspondence with Lumley, were occasioned by thoughts connected with Maltravers, or unacknowledged recollections of Legard, it remains for the acute reader himself to ascertain.

The Doltimores had been about three weeks in Paris; and for a fortnight of that time Legard had been their constant guest, and half the inmate of their hotel, when, on that night which has been commemorated in our last book, Maltravers suddenly once more beheld the face of Evelyn, and in the same hour learned that she was free. He quitted Valerie's box; with a burning pulse and a beating heart, joy and surprise and hope sparkling in his eyes and brightening his whole aspect, he hastened to Evelyn's side.

It was at this time Legard, who sat behind Miss Cameron, unconscious of the approach of a rival, happened by one of those chances which occur in conversation to mention the name of Maltravers. He asked Evelyn if she had yet met him.

"What! is he, then, in Paris?" asked Evelyn, quickly. "I heard, indeed," she continued, "that he left Burleigh for Paris, but imagined he had gone on to Italy."

"No, he is still here; but he goes, I believe, little into the society Lady Doltimore chiefly visits. Is he one of your favourites, Miss Cameron?"

There was a slight increase of colour in Evelyn's beautiful cheek, as she answered, —

"Is it possible not to admire and be interested in one so gifted?"

"He has certainly noble and fine qualities," returned Legard; "but I cannot feel at ease with him: a coldness, a *hauteur*, a measured distance of manner, seem to forbid even esteem. Yet I ought not to say so," he added, with a pang of self-reproach.

"No, indeed, you ought not to say so," said Evelyn, shaking her head with a pretty affectation of anger; "for I know that you pretend to like what I like, and admire what I admire; and I am an enthusiast in all that relates to Mr. Maltravers!"

"I know that I would wish to see all things in life through Miss Cameron's eyes," whispered Legard, softly; and this was the most meaning speech he had ever yet made.

Evelyn turned away, and seemed absorbed in the opera; and at that instant the door of the box opened, and Maltravers entered.

In her open, undisguised, youthful delight at seeing him again, Maltravers felt, indeed, "as if Paradise were opened in her face." In his own agitated emotions, he scarcely noticed that Legard had risen and resigned his seat to him; he availed himself of the civility, greeted his old acquaintance with a smile and a bow, and in a few minutes he was in deep converse with Evelyn.

Never had he so successfully exerted the singular, the master-fascination that he could command at will, — the more powerful from its contrast to his ordinary coldness. In the very expression of his eyes, the very tone of his voice, there was that in Maltravers, seen at his happier moments, which irresistibly interested and absorbed your attention: he could make you forget everything but himself, and the rich, easy, yet earnest eloquence, which gave colour to his language and melody to his voice. In that hour of renewed intercourse with one who had at first awakened, if not her heart, at least her imagination and her deeper thoughts, certain it is that even Legard was not missed. As she smiled and listened, Evelyn dreamed not of the anguish she inflicted. Leaning against the box, Legard surveyed the absorbed attention of Evelyn, the adoring eyes of Maltravers, with that utter and crushing wretchedness which no passion but jealousy, and that only while it is yet a virgin agony, can bestow! He had never before even dreamed of rivalry in such a quarter; but there was that ineffable instinct, which lovers have, and which so seldom errs, that told him at once that in Maltravers

was the greatest obstacle his passion could encounter. He waited in hopes that Evelyn would take the occasion to turn to him at least — when the fourth act closed. She did not; and, unable to constrain his emotions, and reply to the small-talk of Lord Doltimore, he abruptly quitted the box.

When the opera was over, Maltravers offered his arm to Evelyn; she accepted it, and then she looked round for Legard. He was gone.

BOOK VIII.

ὦ Ζεῦ, τί μου δρᾶσαι βεβούλευσαι πέρι;

O Fate! O Heaven! — what have ye then decreed?

SOPHOCLES: *Æd. Tyr.* 738.

ἄβρις, . . .

ἀκροτάταν εἰσανάβασ' ὑπὸ τομον
ῥουσέν νιν εἰς ἀνάγκαν. — *Ibid*, 874.

"Insolent pride . . .

The topmost crag of the great precipice
Surmounts — to rush to ruin."

CHAPTER I.

. . . SHE is young, wise, fair,
In these to Nature she's immediate heir.
. . . Honours best thrive
When rather from our acts we them derive
Than our foregoers! — *All's Well that Ends Well*.

LETTER FROM ERNEST MALTRAVERS TO THE HON. FREDERICK CLEVELAND.

EVELYN is free; she is in Paris; I have seen her, — I see her daily!

How true it is that we cannot make a philosophy of indifference! The affections are stronger than all our reasonings. We must take them into our alliance, or they will destroy all our theories of self-government. Such fools of fate are we, passing from system to system, from scheme to scheme, vainly

seeking to shut out passion and sorrow — forgetting that they are born within us — and return to the soul as the seasons to the earth! Yet, — years, many years ago, when I first looked gravely into my own nature and being here, when I first awakened to the dignity and solemn responsibilities of human life, I had resolved to tame and curb myself into a thing of rule and measure. Bearing within me the wound scarred over but never healed, the consciousness of wrong to the heart that had leaned upon me, haunted by the memory of my lost Alice, I shuddered at new affections bequeathing new griefs. Wrapped in a haughty egotism, I wished not to extend my empire over a wider circuit than my own intellect and passions. I turned from the trader-covetousness of bliss, that would freight the wealth of life upon barks exposed to every wind upon the seas of Fate; I was contented with the hope to pass life alone, honoured, though unloved. Slowly and reluctantly I yielded to the fascinations of Florence Lascelles. The hour that sealed the compact between us was one of regret and alarm. In vain I sought to deceive myself, — I felt that I did not love. And then I imagined that Love was no longer in my nature, — that I had exhausted its treasures before my time, and left my heart a bankrupt. Not till the last — not till that glorious soul broke out in all its brightness the nearer it approached the source to which it has returned — did I feel of what tenderness she was worthy and I was capable. She died, and the world was darkened! Energy, ambition, my former aims and objects, were all sacrificed at her tomb. But amidst ruins and through the darkness, my soul yet supported me; I could no longer hope, but I could endure. I was resolved that I would not be subdued, and that the world should not hear me groan. Amidst strange and far-distant scenes, amidst hordes to whom my very language was unknown, in wastes and forests, which the step of civilized man, with his sorrows and his dreams, had never trodden, I wrestled with my soul, as the patriarch of old wrestled with the angel, — and the angel was at last the victor! You do not mistake me: you know that it was not the death of Florence alone that worked in me that awful revolution; but with that death the

last glory fled from the face of things that had seemed to me beautiful of old. Hers was a love that accompanied and dignified the schemes and aspirations of manhood, — a love that was an incarnation of ambition itself; and all the evils and disappointments that belong to ambition seemed to crowd around my heart like vultures to a feast allured and invited by the dead. But this at length was over; the barbarous state restored me to the civilized. I returned to my equals, prepared no more to be an actor in the strife, but a calm spectator of the turbulent arena. I once more laid my head beneath the roof of my fathers; and if without any clear and definite object, I at least hoped to find amidst “my old hereditary trees” the charm of contemplation and repose. And scarce—in the first hours of my arrival—had I indulged that dream, when a fair face, a sweet voice, that had once before left deep and unobliterated impressions on my heart, scattered all my philosophy to the winds. I saw Evelyn! and if ever there was love at first sight, it was that which I felt for her: I lived in her presence, and forgot the Future! Or, rather, I was with the Past, — in the bowers of my spring-tide of life and hope! It was an after-birth of youth — my love for that young heart!

It is, indeed, only in maturity that we know how lovely were our earliest years! What depth of wisdom in the old Greek myth, that allotted Hebe as the prize to the god who had been the arch-labourer of life! and whom the satiety of all that results from experience had made enamoured of all that belongs to the Hopeful and the New!

This enchanting child, this delightful Evelyn, this ray of undreamed of sunshine, smiled away all my palaces of ice. I loved, Cleveland, — I loved more ardently, more passionately, more wildly than ever I did of old! But suddenly I learned that she was affianced to another, and felt that it was not for me to question, to seek the annulment of the bond. I had been unworthy to love Evelyn if I had not loved honour more! I fled from her presence, honestly and resolutely; I sought to conquer a forbidden passion; I believed that I had not won affection in return; I believed, from certain expressions that

I overheard Evelyn utter to another, that her heart as well as her hand was given to Vargrave. I came hither; you know how sternly and resolutely I strove to eradicate a weakness that seemed without even the justification of hope! If I suffered, I betrayed it not. Suddenly Evelyn appeared again before me! — and suddenly I learned that she was free! Oh, the rapture of that moment! Could you have seen her bright face, her enchanting smile, when we met again! Her ingenuous innocence did not conceal her gladness at seeing me! What hopes broke upon me! Despite the difference of our years, I think she loves me! that in that love I am about at last to learn what blessings there are in life.

Evelyn has the simplicity, the tenderness, of Alice, with the refinement and culture of Florence herself; not the genius, not the daring spirit, not the almost fearful brilliancy of that ill-fated being, — but with a taste as true to the Beautiful, with a soul as sensitive to the Sublime! In Evelyn's presence I feel a sense of peace, of security, of home! Happy! thrice happy! he who will take her to his breast! Of late she has assumed a new charm in my eyes, — a certain pensiveness and abstraction have succeeded to her wonted gayety. Ah, Love is pensive, — is it not, Cleveland? How often I ask myself that question! And yet, amidst all my hopes, there are hours when I tremble and despond! How can that innocent and joyous spirit sympathize with all that mine has endured and known? How, even though her imagination be dazzled by some prestige around my name, how can I believe that I have awakened her heart to that deep and real love of which it is capable, and which youth excites in youth? When we meet at her home, or amidst the quiet yet brilliant society which is gathered round Madame de Ventadour or the Montaignes, with whom she is an especial favourite; when we converse; when I sit by her, and her soft eyes meet mine, — I feel not the disparity of years; my heart speaks to her, and *that* is youthful still! But in the more gay and crowded haunts to which her presence allures me, when I see that fairy form surrounded by those who have not outlived the

pleasures that so naturally dazzle and captivate her, then, indeed, I feel that my tastes, my habits, my pursuits, belong to another season of life, and ask myself anxiously if my nature and my years are those that can make *her* happy? Then, indeed, I recognize the wide interval that time and trial place between one whom the world has wearied, and one for whom the world is new. If she should discover hereafter that youth should love only youth, my bitterest anguish would be that of remorse! I know how deeply I love by knowing how immeasurably dearer her happiness is than my own! I will wait, then, yet a while, I will examine, I will watch well that I do not deceive myself. As yet I think that I have no rivals whom I need fear: surrounded as she is by the youngest and the gayest, she still turns with evident pleasure to me, whom she calls her friend. She will forego the amusements she most loves for society in which we can converse more at ease. You remember, for instance, young Legard? He is here; and, before I met Evelyn, was much at Lady Doltimore's house. I cannot be blind to his superior advantages of youth and person; and there is something striking and prepossessing in the gentle yet manly frankness of his manner, — and yet no fear of his rivalry ever haunts me. True, that of late he has been little in Evelyn's society; nor do I think, in the frivolity of his pursuits, he can have educated his mind to appreciate Evelyn, or be possessed of those qualities which would render him worthy of her. But there is something good in the young man, despite his foibles, — something that wins upon me; and you will smile to learn, that he has even surprised from *me* — usually so reserved on such matters — the confession of my attachment and hopes! Evelyn often talks to me of her mother, and describes her in colours so glowing that I feel the greatest interest in one who has helped to form so beautiful and pure a mind. Can you learn who Lady Vargrave was? There is evidently some mystery thrown over her birth and connections; and, from what I can hear, this arises from their lowliness. You know that, though I have been accused of family pride, it is a pride of a

peculiar sort. I am proud, not of the length of a mouldering pedigree, but of some historical quarterings in my escutcheon, — of some blood of scholars and of heroes that rolls in my veins; it is the same kind of pride that an Englishman may feel in belonging to a country that has produced Shakspeare and Bacon. I have never, I hope, felt the vulgar pride that disdains want of birth in others; and I care not three straws whether my friend or my wife be descended from a king or a peasant. It is myself, and not my connections, who alone can disgrace my lineage; therefore, however humble Lady Vargrave's parentage, do not scruple to inform me, should you learn any intelligence that bears upon it.

I had a conversation last night with Evelyn that delighted me. By some accident we spoke of Lord Vargrave; and she told me, with an enchanting candour, of the position in which she stood with him, and the conscientious and noble scruples she felt as to the enjoyment of a fortune, which her benefactor and stepfather had evidently intended to be shared with his nearest relative. In these scruples I cordially concurred; and if I marry Evelyn, my first care will be to carry them into effect, — by securing to Vargrave, as far as the law may permit, the larger part of the income; I should like to say all, — at least till Evelyn's children would have the right to claim it: a right not to be enforced during her own, and, therefore, probably not during Vargrave's life. I own that this would be no sacrifice, for I am proud enough to recoil from the thought of being indebted for fortune to the woman I love. It was that kind of pride which gave coldness and constraint to my regard for Florence; and for the rest, my own property (much increased by the simplicity of my habits of life for the last few years) will suffice for all Evelyn or myself could require. Ah, madman that I am! I calculate already on marriage, even while I have so much cause for anxiety as to love. But my heart beats, — my heart has grown a dial that keeps the account of time; by its movements I calculate the moments — in an hour I shall see her!

Oh, never, never, in my wildest and earliest visions, could I have fancied that I should love as I love now! Adieu, my

oldest and kindest friend! If I am happy at last, it will be something to feel that at last I shall have satisfied your expectations of my youth.

Affectionately yours,

E. MALTRAVERS.

RUE DE —, PARIS,

January —, 18—.

CHAPTER II.

IN her youth

There is a prone and speechless dialect —
Such as moves men. — *Measure for Measure*.

Abbess. Haply in private —

Adriana. And in assemblies too. — *Comedy of Errors*.

It was true, as Maltravers had stated, that Legard had of late been little at Lady Doltimore's, or in the same society as Evelyn. With the vehemence of an ardent and passionate nature, he yielded to the jealous rage and grief that devoured him. He saw too clearly, and from the first, that Maltravers adored Evelyn; and in her familiar kindness of manner towards him, in the unlimited veneration in which she appeared to hold his gifts and qualities, he thought that that love might become reciprocal. He became gloomy and almost morose; he shunned Evelyn, he forbore to enter into the lists against his rival. Perhaps the intellectual superiority of Maltravers, the extraordinary conversational brilliancy that he could display when he pleased, the commanding dignity of his manners, even the matured authority of his reputation and years, might have served to awe the hopes, as well as to wound the vanity, of a man accustomed himself to be the oracle of a circle. These might have strongly influenced Legard in withdrawing himself from Evelyn's society; but there was one circumstance, connected with motives much more generous, that mainly determined his conduct. It happened that Maltravers,

shortly after his first interview with Evelyn, was riding alone one day in the more sequestered part of the Bois de Boulogne, when he encountered Legard, also alone, and on horseback. The latter, on succeeding to his uncle's fortune, had taken care to repay his debt to Maltravers; he had done so in a short but feeling and grateful letter, which had been forwarded to Maltravers at Paris, and which pleased and touched him. Since that time he had taken a liking to the young man, and now, meeting him at Paris, he sought, to a certain extent, Legard's more intimate acquaintance. Maltravers was in that happy mood when we are inclined to be friends with all men. It is true, however, that, though unknown to himself, that pride of bearing, which often gave to the very virtues of Maltravers an unamiable aspect, occasionally irritated one who felt he had incurred to him an obligation of honour and of life never to be effaced; it made the sense of this obligation more intolerable to Legard; it made him more desirous to acquit himself of the charge. But on this day there was so much cordiality in the greeting of Maltravers, and he pressed Legard in so friendly a manner to join him in his ride, that the young man's heart was softened, and they rode together, conversing familiarly on such topics as were in common between them. At last the conversation fell on Lord and Lady Doltimore; and thence Maltravers, whose soul was full of one thought, turned it indirectly towards Evelyn.

"Did you ever see Lady Vargrave?"

"Never," replied Legard, looking another way; "but Lady Doltimore says she is as beautiful as Evelyn herself, if that be possible; and still so young in form and countenance, that she looks rather like her sister than her mother!"

"How I should like to know her!" said Maltravers, with a sudden energy.

Legard changed the subject. He spoke of the Carnival, of balls, of masquerades, of operas, of reigning beauties!

"Ah," said Maltravers, with a half sigh, "yours is the age for those dazzling pleasures; to me they are 'the twice-told tale.'"

Maltravers meant it not, but this remark chafed Legard.

He thought it conveyed a sarcasm on the childishness of his own mind or the levity of his pursuits; his colour mounted, as he replied, —

“It is not, I fear, the slight difference of years between us, — it is the difference of intellect you would insinuate; but you should remember all men have not your resources; all men cannot pretend to genius!”

“My dear Legard,” said Maltravers, kindly, “do not fancy that I could have designed any insinuation half so presumptuous and impertinent. Believe me, I envy you, sincerely and sadly, all those faculties of enjoyment which I have worn away. Oh, how I envy you! for, were they still mine, then — then, indeed, I might hope to mould myself into greater congeniality with the beautiful and the young!”

Maltravers paused a moment, and resumed, with a grave smile: “I trust, Legard, that you will be wiser than I have been; that you will gather your roses while it is yet May: and that you will not live to thirty-six, pining for happiness and home, a disappointed and desolate man; till, when your ideal is at last found, you shrink back appalled, to discover that you have lost none of the tendencies to love, but many of the graces by which love is to be allured!”

There was so much serious and earnest feeling in these words that they went home at once to Legard’s sympathies. He felt irresistibly impelled to learn the worst.

“Maltravers,” said he, in a hurried tone, “it would be an idle compliment to say that you are not likely to love in vain; perhaps it is indelicate in me to apply a general remark; and yet — yet I cannot but fancy that I have discovered your secret, and that you are not insensible to the charms of Miss Cameron!”

“Legard!” said Maltravers, — and so strong was his fervent attachment to Evelyn, that it swept away all his natural coldness and reserve, — “I tell you plainly and frankly that in my love for Evelyn Cameron lie the last hopes I have in life. I have no thought, no ambition, no sentiment that is not vowed to her. If my love should be unreturned, I may strive to endure the blow, I may mix with the world, I may

seem to occupy myself in the aims of others; but my heart will be broken! Let us talk of this no more; you have surprised my secret, though it must have betrayed itself. Learn from me how preternaturally strong, how generally fatal is love deferred to that day when — in the stern growth of all the feelings — love writes itself on granite!"

Maltravers, as if impatient of his own weakness, put spurs to his horse, and they rode on rapidly for some time without speaking.

That silence was employed by Legard in meditating over all he had heard and witnessed, in recalling all that he owed to Maltravers; and before that silence was broken the young man nobly resolved not even to attempt, not even to hope, a rivalry with Maltravers; to forego all the expectations he had so fondly nursed, to absent himself from the company of Evelyn, to requite faithfully and firmly that act of generosity to which he owed the preservation of his life, — the redemption of his honour.

Agreeably to this determination, he abstained from visiting those haunts in which Evelyn shone; and if accident brought them together, his manner was embarrassed and abrupt. She wondered, — at last, perhaps she resented, — it may be that she grieved; for certain it is that Maltravers was right in thinking that her manner had lost the gayety that distinguished it at Merton Rectory. But still it may be doubted whether Evelyn had seen enough of Legard, and whether her fancy and romance were still sufficiently free from the magical influences of the genius that called them forth in the eloquent homage of Maltravers, to trace, herself, to any causes connected with her younger lover the listless melancholy that crept over her. In very young women — new alike to the world and the knowledge of themselves — many vague and undefined feelings herald the dawn of Love; shade after shade and light upon light succeeds before the sun breaks forth, and the earth awakens to his presence.

It was one evening that Legard had suffered himself to be led into a party at the — ambassador's; and there, as he stood by the door, he saw at a little distance Maltravers con-

versing with Evelyn. Again he writhed beneath the tortures of his jealous anguish; and there, as he gazed and suffered, he resolved (as Maltravers had done before him) to fly from the place that had a little while ago seemed to him Elysium! He would quit Paris, he would travel, he would not see Evelyn again till the irrevocable barrier was passed, and she was the wife of Maltravers! In the first heat of this determination, he turned towards some young men standing near him, one of whom was about to visit Vienna. He gayly proposed to join him, — a proposal readily accepted, and began conversing on the journey, the city, its splendid and proud society, with all that cruel exhilaration which the forced spirits of a stricken heart can alone display, when Evelyn (whose conference with Maltravers was ended) passed close by him. She was leaning on Lady Doltimore's arm, and the admiring murmur of his companions caused Legard to turn suddenly round.

"You are not dancing to-night, Colonel Legard," said Caroline, glancing towards Evelyn. "The more the season for balls advances, the more indolent you become."

Legard muttered a confused reply, one half of which seemed petulant, while the other half was inaudible.

"Not so indolent as you suppose," said his friend. "Legard meditates an excursion sufficient, I hope, to redeem his character in your eyes. It is a long journey, and, what is worse, a very cold journey, to Vienna."

"Vienna! do you think of going to Vienna?" cried Caroline.

"Yes," said Legard. "I hate Paris; any place better than this odious city!" and he moved away.

Evelyn's eyes followed him sadly and gravely. She remained by Lady Doltimore's side, abstracted and silent for several minutes.

Meanwhile Caroline, turning to Lord Devonport (the friend who had proposed the Viennese excursion), said, "It is cruel in you to go to Vienna, — it is doubly cruel to rob Lord Doltimore of his best friend and Paris of its best waltzer."

"Oh, it is a voluntary offer of Legard's, Lady Doltimore, — believe me, I have used no persuasive arts. But the fact is, that we have been talking of a fair widow, the beauty of

Austria, and as proud and as unassailable as Ehrenbreitstein itself. Legard's vanity is piqued; and so—as a professed lady-killer—he intends to see what can be effected by the handsomest Englishman of his time.”

Caroline laughed, and new claimants on her notice succeeded to Lord Devonport. It was not till the ladies were waiting their carriage in the shawl-room that Lady Doltimore noticed the paleness and thoughtful brow of Evelyn.

“Are you fatigued or unwell, dear?” she said.

“No,” answered Evelyn, forcing a smile; and at that moment they were joined by Maltravers, with the intelligence that it would be some minutes before the carriage could draw up. Caroline amused herself in the interval by shrewd criticisms on the dresses and characters of her various friends. Caroline had grown an amazing prude in her judgment of others!

“What a turban!—prudent for Mrs. A—— to wear,—bright red; it puts out her face, as the sun puts out the fire. Mr. Maltravers, do observe Lady B—— with that *very* young gentleman. After all her experience in angling, it is odd that she should still only throw in for small fish. Pray, why is the marriage between Lady C—— D—— and Mr. F—— broken off? Is it true that he is so much in debt, and is so very—very profligate? They say she is heartbroken.”

“Really, Lady Doltimore,” said Maltravers, smiling, “I am but a bad scandal-monger. But poor F—— is not, I believe, much worse than others. How do we know whose fault it is when a marriage is broken off? Lady C—— D—— heartbroken! what an idea! Nowadays there is never any affection in compacts of that sort; and the chain that binds the frivolous nature is but a gossamer thread! Fine gentlemen and fine ladies, their loves and their marriages—

“‘May flourish and may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made.’

Never believe that a heart long accustomed to beat only in good society can be broken,—it is rarely ever touched!”

Evelyn listened attentively, and seemed struck. She sighed,

and said in a very low voice, as to herself, "It is true — how could I think otherwise?"

For the next few days Evelyn was unwell, and did not quit her room. Maltravers was in despair. The flowers, the books, the music he sent; his anxious inquiries, his earnest and respectful notes, touched with that ineffable charm which Heart and Intellect breathe into the most trifling coinage from their mint, — all affected Evelyn sensibly. Perhaps she contrasted them with Legard's indifference and apparent caprice; perhaps in that contrast Maltravers gained more than by all his brilliant qualities. Meanwhile, without visit, without message, without farewell, — unconscious, it is true, of Evelyn's illness, — Legard departed for Vienna.

CHAPTER III.

A PLEASING land . . .

Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye,

And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,

Forever flashing round a summer sky. — THOMSON.

DAILY, hourly, increased the influence of Evelyn over Maltravers. Oh, what a dupe is a man's pride! what a fool his wisdom! That a girl, a mere child, one who scarce knew her own heart, beautiful as it was, — whose deeper feelings still lay coiled up in their sweet buds, — that she should thus master this proud, wise man! But as thou — our universal teacher — as thou, O Shakspeare! haply speaking from the hints of thine own experience, hast declared —

"None are so truly caught, when they are caught,

As wit turned fool; folly in wisdom hatched,

Hath wisdom's warrant."

Still, methinks that, in that surpassing and dangerously indulged affection which levelled thee, Maltravers, with the weakest, which overturned all thy fine philosophy of Stoicism, and made thee the veriest slave of the "Rose Garden,"

—still, Maltravers, thou mightest at least have seen that thou hast lost forever all right to pride, all privilege to disdain the herd! But thou wert proud of thine own infirmity! And far sharper must be that lesson which can teach thee that Pride — thine angel — is ever pre-doomed to fall.

What a mistake to suppose that the passions are strongest in youth! The passions are not stronger, but the control over them is weaker. They are more easily excited, they are more violent and more apparent; but they have less energy, less durability, less intense and concentrated power, than in maturer life. In youth, passion succeeds to passion, and one breaks upon the other, as waves upon a rock, till the heart frets itself to repose. In manhood, the great deep flows on, more calm, but more profound; its serenity is the proof of the might and terror of its course, were the wind to blow and the storm to rise.

A young man's ambition is but vanity, — it has no definite aim, it plays with a thousand toys. As with one passion, so with the rest. In youth, Love is ever on the wing, but, like the birds in April, it hath not yet built its nest. With so long a career of summer and hope before it, the disappointment of to-day is succeeded by the novelty of to-morrow, and the sun that advances to the noon but dries up its fervent tears. But when we have arrived at that epoch of life, — when, if the light fail us, if the last rose wither, we feel that the loss cannot be retrieved, and that the frost and the darkness are at hand, Love becomes to us a treasure that we watch over and hoard with a miser's care. Our youngest-born affection is our darling and our idol, the fondest pledge of the Past, the most cherished of our hopes for the Future. A certain melancholy that mingles with our joy at the possession only enhances its charm. We feel ourselves so dependent on it for all that is yet to come. Our other barks — our gay galleys of pleasure, our stately argosies of pride — have been swallowed up by the remorseless wave. On this last vessel we freight our all, to its frail tenement we commit ourselves. The star that guides it is our guide, and in the tempest that menaces we behold our own doom!

Still Maltravers shrank from the confession that trembled on his lips; still he adhered to the course he had prescribed to himself. If ever (as he had implied in his letter to Cleveland) — if ever Evelyn should discover they were not suited to each other! The possibility of such an affliction impressed his judgment, the dread of it chilled his heart. With all his pride, there was a certain humility in Maltravers that was perhaps one cause of his reserve. He knew what a beautiful possession is youth, — its sanguine hopes, its elastic spirit, its inexhaustible resources! What to the eyes of woman were the acquisitions which manhood had brought him, — the vast but the sad experience, the arid wisdom, the philosophy based on disappointment? He might be loved but for the vain glitter of name and reputation, — and love might vanish as custom dimmed the illusion. Men of strong affections are jealous of their own genius. They know how separate a thing from the household character genius often is, — they fear lest they should be loved for a quality, not for themselves.

Thus communed he with himself; thus, as the path had become clear to his hopes, did new fears arise; and thus did love bring, as it ever does, in its burning wake, —

“The pang, the agony, the doubt!”

Maltravers then confirmed himself in the resolution he had formed: he would cautiously examine Evelyn and himself; he would weigh in the balance every straw that the wind should turn up; he would not aspire to the treasure, unless he could feel secure that the coffer could preserve the gem. This was not only a prudent, it was a just and a generous determination. It was one which we all ought to form if the fervour of our passions will permit us. We have no right to sacrifice years to moments, and to melt the pearl that has no price in a single draught! But can Maltravers adhere to his wise precautions? The truth must be spoken, — it was, perhaps, the first time in his life that Maltravers had been really *in* love.

As the reader will remember, he had not been in love with the haughty Florence; admiration, gratitude, — the affection of the head, not that of the feelings, — had been the links that

bound him to the enthusiastic correspondent revealed in the gifted beauty; and the gloomy circumstances connected with her early fate had left deep furrows in his memory. Time and vicissitude had effaced the wounds, and the Light of the Beautiful dawned once more in the face of Evelyn. Valerie de Ventadour had been but the fancy of a roving breast. Alice, the sweet Alice! — her, indeed, in the first flower of youth, he had loved with a boy's romance. He had loved her deeply, fondly, — but perhaps he had never been *in* love with her; he had mourned her loss for years, — insensibly to himself her loss had altered his character and cast a melancholy gloom over all the colours of his life. But she whose range of ideas was so confined, she who had but broke into knowledge, as the chrysalis into the butterfly — how much in that prodigal and gifted nature, bounding onwards into the broad plains of life, must the peasant girl have failed to fill! They had had nothing in common but their youth and their love. It was a dream that had hovered over the poet-boy in the morning twilight, — a dream he had often wished to recall, a dream that had haunted him in the noon-day, — but had, as all boyish visions ever have done, left the heart unexhausted, and the passions unconsumed! Years, long years, since then had rolled away, and yet, perhaps, one unconscious attraction that drew Maltravers so suddenly towards Evelyn was a something indistinct and undefinable that reminded him of Alice. There was no similarity in their features; but at times a tone in Evelyn's voice, a "trick of the manner," an air, a gesture, recalled him, over the gulfs of Time, to Poetry, and Hope, and Alice.

In the youth of each — the absent and the present one — there was resemblance, — resemblance in their simplicity, their grace. Perhaps Alice, of the two, had in her nature more real depth, more ardour of feeling, more sublimity of sentiment, than Evelyn. But in her primitive ignorance half her noblest qualities were embedded and unknown. And Evelyn — his equal in rank; Evelyn, well cultivated; Evelyn, so long courted, so deeply studied — had such advantages over the poor peasant girl! Still the poor peasant girl often

seemed to smile on him from that fair face; and in Evelyn he half loved Alice again!

So these two persons now met daily; their intercourse was even more familiar than before, their several minds grew hourly more developed and transparent to each other. But of love Maltravers still forbore to speak; they were friends, — no more; such friends as the disparity of their years and their experience might warrant them to be. And in that young and innocent nature — with its rectitude, its enthusiasm, and its pious and cheerful tendencies — Maltravers found freshness in the desert, as the camel-driver lingering at the well. Insensibly his heart warmed again to his kind; and as the harp of David to the ear of Saul, was the soft voice that lulled remembrance and awakened hope in the lonely man.

Meanwhile, what was the effect that the presence, the attentions, of Maltravers produced on Evelyn? Perhaps it was of that kind which most flatters us and most deceives. She never dreamed of comparing him with others. To her thoughts he stood aloof and alone from all his kind. It may seem a paradox, but it might be that she admired and venerated him almost too much for love. Still her pleasure in his society was so evident and unequivocal, her deference to his opinion so marked, she sympathized in so many of his objects, she had so much blindness or forbearance for his faults (and he never sought to mask them), that the most diffident of men might have drawn from so many symptoms hopes the most auspicious. Since the departure of Legard, the gayeties of Paris lost their charm for Evelyn, and more than ever she could appreciate the society of her friend. He thus gradually lost his earlier fears of her forming too keen an attachment to the great world; and as nothing could be more apparent than Evelyn's indifference to the crowd of flatterers and suitors that hovered round her, Maltravers no longer dreaded a rival. He began to feel assured that they had both gone through the ordeal; and that he might ask for love without a doubt of its immutability and faith. At this period they were both invited, with the Doltimores, to spend

a few days at the villa of De Montaigne, near St. Cloud. And there it was that Maltravers determined to know his fate!

CHAPTER IV.

CHAOS of Thought and Passion all confused. — **POPE.**

It is to the contemplation of a very different scene that the course of our story now conducts us.

Between St. Cloud and Versailles there was at that time — perhaps there still is — a lone and melancholy house, appropriated to the insane, — melancholy, not from its site, but the purpose to which it is devoted. Placed on an eminence, the windows of the mansion command — beyond the gloomy walls that gird the garden ground — one of those enchanting prospects which win for France her title to *La Belle*. There the glorious Seine is seen in the distance, broad and winding through the varied plains, and beside the gleaming villages and villas. There, too, beneath the clear blue sky of France, the forest-lands of Versailles and St. Germain stretch in dark luxuriance around and afar. There you may see sleeping on the verge of the landscape the mighty city, — crowned with the thousand spires from which, proud above the rest, rises the eyry of Napoleon's eagle, the pinnacle of Notre Dame.

Remote, sequestered, the place still commands the survey of the turbulent world below; and Madness gazes upon prospects that might well charm the thoughtful eyes of Imagination or of Wisdom! In one of the rooms of this house sat Castruccio Cesarini. The apartment was furnished even with elegance; a variety of books strewed the table; nothing for comfort or for solace that the care and providence of affection could dictate was omitted. Cesarini was alone: leaning his cheek upon his hand, he gazed on the beautiful and tranquil view we have described. "And am I never to set a free foot

on that soil again?" he muttered indignantly, as he broke from his reverie.

The door opened, and the keeper of the sad abode (a surgeon of humanity and eminence) entered, followed by De Montaigne. Cesarini turned round and scowled upon the latter; the surgeon, after a few words of salutation, withdrew to a corner of the room, and appeared absorbed in a book. De Montaigne approached his brother-in-law, — "I have brought you some poems just published at Milan, my dear Castruccio, — they will please you."

"Give me my liberty!" cried Cesarini, clenching his hands. "Why am I to be detained here? Why are my nights to be broken by the groans of maniacs, and my days devoured in a solitude that loathes the aspect of things around me? Am I mad? You know I am not! It is an old trick to say that poets are mad, — you mistake our agonies for insanity. See, I am calm; I can reason: give me any test of sound mind — no matter how rigid — I will pass it; I am not mad, — I swear I am not!"

"No, my dear Castruccio," said De Montaigne, soothingly; "but you are still unwell, — you still have fever; when next I see you perhaps you may be recovered sufficiently to dismiss the doctor and change the air. Meanwhile is there anything you would have added or altered?"

Cesarini had listened to this speech with a mocking sarcasm on his lip, but an expression of such hopeless wretchedness in his eyes, as they alone can comprehend who have witnessed madness in its lucid intervals. He sank down, and his head drooped gloomily on his breast. "No," said he; "I want nothing but free air or death, — no matter which."

De Montaigne stayed some time with the unhappy man, and sought to soothe him; but it was in vain. Yet when he rose to depart, Cesarini started up, and fixing on him his large wistful eyes, exclaimed, "Ah! do not leave me yet. It is so dreadful to be alone with the dead and the worse than dead!"

The Frenchman turned aside to wipe his eyes, and stifle the rising at his heart; and again he sat, and again he sought to soothe. At length Cesarini, seemingly more calm, gave him

leave to depart. "Go," said he, "go; tell Teresa I am better, that I love her tenderly, that I shall live to tell her children not to be poets. Stay, you asked if there was aught I wished changed: yes, this room; it is too still: I hear my own pulse beat so loudly in the silence, it is horrible! There is a room below, by the window of which there is a tree, and the winds rock its boughs to and fro, and it sighs and groans like a living thing; it will be pleasant to look at that tree, and see the birds come home to it, — yet that tree is wintry and blasted too! It will be pleasant to hear it fret and chafe in the stormy nights; it will be a friend to me, that old tree! let me have that room. Nay, look not at each other, — it is not so high as this; but the window is barred, — I cannot escape!" And Cesarini smiled.

"Certainly," said the surgeon, "if you prefer that room; but it has not so fine a view."

"I hate the view of the world that has cast me off. When may I change?"

"This very evening."

"Thank you; it will be a great revolution in my life."

And Cesarini's eyes brightened, and he looked happy. De Montaigne, thoroughly unmanned, tore himself away.

The promise was kept, and Cesarini was transferred that night to the chamber he had selected.

As soon as it was deep night, the last visit of the keeper paid, and, save now and then, by some sharp cry in the more distant quarter of the house, all was still, Cesarini rose from his bed; a partial light came from the stars that streamed through the frosty and keen air, and cast a sickly gleam through the heavy bars of the casement. It was then that Cesarini drew from under his pillow a long-cherished and carefully-concealed treasure. Oh, with what rapture had he first possessed himself of it! with what anxiety had it been watched and guarded! how many cunning stratagems and profound inventions had gone towards the baffling the jealous search of the keeper and his myrmidons! The abandoned and wandering mother never clasped her child more fondly to her bosom, nor gazed upon his features with more passion-

ate visions for the future. And what had so enchanted the poor prisoner, so deluded the poor maniac? A large nail! He had found it accidentally in the garden; he had hoarded it for weeks, — it had inspired him with the hope of liberty. Often, in the days far gone, he had read of the wonders that had been effected, of the stones removed, and the bars filed, by the self-same kind of implement. He remembered that the most celebrated of those bold unfortunates who live a life against the law, had said, "Choose my prison, and give me but a rusty nail, and I laugh at your jailers and your walls!" He crept to the window; he examined his relic by the dim starlight; he kissed it passionately, and the tears stood in his eyes.

Ah, who shall determine the worth of things? No king that night so prized his crown as the madman prized that rusty inch of wire, — the proper prey of the rubbish-cart and dunghill. Little didst thou think, old blacksmith, when thou drewest the dull metal from the fire, of what precious price it was to become!

Cesarini, with the astuteness of his malady, had long marked out this chamber for the scene of his operations; he had observed that the framework in which the bars were set seemed old and worm-eaten; that the window was but a few feet from the ground; that the noise made in the winter nights by the sighing branches of the old tree without would deaden the sound of the lone workman. Now, then, his hopes were to be crowned. Poor fool! and even *thou* hast hope still! All that night he toiled and toiled, and sought to work his iron into a file; now he tried the bars, and now the framework. Alas! he had not learned the skill in such tools, possessed by his renowned model and inspirer; the flesh was worn from his fingers, the cold drops stood on his brow; and morning surprised him, advanced not a hair-breadth in his labour.

He crept back to bed, and again hid the useless implement, and at last he slept.

And, night after night, the same task, the same results! But at length, one day, when Cesarini returned from his

moody walk in the gardens (*pleasure-grounds* they were called by the owner), he found better workmen than he at the window; they were repairing the framework, they were strengthening the bars, — all hope was now gone! The unfortunate said nothing; too cunning to show his despair he eyed them silently, and cursed them; but the old tree was left still, and that was something, — company and music.

A day or two after this barbarous counterplot, Cesarini was walking in the gardens towards the latter part of the afternoon (just when in the short days the darkness begins to steal apace over the chill and western sun), when he was accosted by a fellow-captive, who had often before sought his acquaintance; for they try to have friends, — those poor people! Even *we* do the same; though *we* say we are *not* mad! This man had been a warrior, had served with Napoleon, had received honours and ribbons, — might, for aught we know, have dreamed of being a marshal! But the demon smote him in the hour of his pride. It was his disease to fancy himself a monarch. He believed, for he forgot chronology, that he was at once the Iron Mask, and the true sovereign of France and Navarre, confined in state by the usurpers of his crown. On other points he was generally sane; a tall, strong man, with fierce features, and stern lines, wherein could be read many a bloody tale of violence and wrong, of lawless passions, of terrible excesses, to which madness might be at once the consummation and the curse. This man had taken a fancy to Cesarini; and, in some hours Cesarini had shunned him less than others, — for they could alike rail against all living things. The lunatic approached Cesarini with an air of dignity and condescension.

“It is a cold night, sir, — and there will be no moon. Has it never occurred to you that the winter is the season for escape?”

Cesarini started; the ex-officer continued, —

“Ay, I see by your manner that you, too, chafe at our ignominious confinement. I think that together we might brave the worst. You probably are confined on some state offence. I give you full pardon, if you assist me. For my-

self I have but to appear in my capital; old Louis le Grand must be near his last hour."

"This madman my best companion!" thought Cesarini, revolting at his own infirmity, as Gulliver started from the Yahoo. "No matter, he talks of escape.

"And how think you," said the Italian, aloud, — "how think you, that we have any chance of deliverance?"

"Hush, speak lower," said the soldier. "In the inner garden, I have observed for the last two days that a gardener is employed in nailing some fig-trees and vines to the wall. Between that garden and these grounds there is but a paling, which we can easily scale. He works till dusk; at the latest hour we can, let us climb noiselessly over the paling, and creep along the vegetable beds till we reach the man. He uses a ladder for his purpose; the rest is clear, — we must fell and gag him, — twist his neck if necessary, — I have twisted a neck before," quoth the maniac, with a horrid smile. "The ladder will help us over the wall, and the night soon grows dark at this season."

Cesarini listened, and his heart beat quick. "Will it be too late to try to-night?" said he in a whisper.

"Perhaps not," said the soldier, who retained all his military acuteness. "But are you prepared, — don't you require time to man yourself?"

"No — no, — I have had time enough! — I am ready."

"Well, then, — hist! — we are watched — one of the jailers! Talk easily, smile, laugh. This way."

They passed by one of the watch of the place, and just as they were in his hearing, the soldier turned to Cesarini, "Sir, will you favour me with your snuff-box?"

"I have none."

"None? what a pity! My good friend," and he turned to the scout, "may I request you to look in my room for my snuff-box? It is on the chimney-piece, — it will not take you a minute."

The soldier was one of those whose insanity was deemed most harmless, and his relations, who were rich and well-born, had requested every indulgence to be shown to him.

The watch suspected nothing, and repaired to the house. As soon as the trees hid him, — “Now,” said the soldier, “stoop almost on all fours, and run quick.”

So saying the maniac crouched low, and glided along with a rapidity which did not distance Cesarini. They reached the paling that separated the vegetable garden from the pleasure-ground; the soldier vaulted over it with ease, Cesarini with more difficulty followed. They crept along; the herbs and vegetable beds, with their long bare stalks, concealed their movements; the man was still on the ladder. “*La bonne Espérance!*” said the soldier through his ground teeth, muttering some old watchword of the wars, and (while Cesarini, below, held the ladder steadfast) he rushed up the steps, and with a sudden effort of his muscular arm, hurled the gardener to the ground. The man, surprised, half stunned, and wholly terrified, did not attempt to wrestle with the two madmen,— he uttered loud cries for help! But help came too late; these strange and fearful comrades had already scaled the wall, had dropped on the other side, and were fast making across the dusky fields to the neighbouring forest.

CHAPTER V.

HOPES and Fears

Start up alarmed, and o'er life's narrow verge

Look down : on what ?—a fathomless abyss !— YOUNG.

MIDNIGHT — and intense frost! There they were — houseless and breadless — the two fugitives, in the heart of that beautiful forest which has rung to the horns of many a royal chase. The soldier, whose youth had been inured to hardships, and to the conquests which our mother-wit wrings from the stepdame Nature, had made a fire by the friction of two pieces of dry wood; such wood was hard to be found, for the snow whitened the level ground, and lay deep in the hollows;

and when it was discovered, the fuel was slow to burn; however, the fire blazed red at last. On a little mound, shaded by a semicircle of huge trees, sat the Outlaws of Human Reason. They cowered over the blaze opposite to each other, and the glare crimsoned their features. And each in his heart longed to rid himself of his mad neighbour; and each felt the awe of solitude, — the dread of sleep beside a comrade whose soul had lost God's light!

"Ho!" said the warrior, breaking a silence that had been long kept, "this is cold work at the best, and hunger pinches me; I almost regret the prison."

"I do not feel the cold," said Cesarini, "and I do not care for hunger: I am revelling only in the sense of liberty!"

"Try and sleep," quoth the soldier, with a coaxing and sinister softness of voice; "we will take it by turns to watch."

"I cannot sleep, — take you the first turn."

"Hark ye, sir!" said the soldier sullenly; "I must not have my commands disputed; now we are free, we are no longer equal: I am heir to the crowns of France and Navarre. Sleep, I say!"

"And what Prince or Potentate, King or Kaiser," cried Cesarini, catching the quick contagion of the fit that had seized his comrade, "can dictate to the monarch of Earth and Air, the Elements and the music-breathing Stars? I am Cesarini the Bard! and the huntsman Orion halts in his chase above to listen to my lyre! Be stilled, rude man! — thou scarest away the angels, whose breath even now was rushing through my hair!"

"It is too horrible!" cried the grim man of blood, shivering; "my enemies are relentless, and give me a madman for a jailer!"

"Ha! a madman!" exclaimed Cesarini, springing to his feet, and glaring at the soldier with eyes that caught and rivalled the blaze of the fire. "And who are you? — what devil from the deep hell, that art leagued with my persecutors against me?"

With the instinct of his old calling and valour, the soldier

also rose when he saw the movement of his companion; and his fierce features worked with rage and fear.

“Avaunt!” said he, waving his arm; “we banish thee from our presence! This is our palace!—and our guards are at hand!” pointing to the still and skeleton trees that grouped round in ghastly bareness. “Begone!”

At that moment they heard at a distance the deep barking of a dog, and each cried simultaneously, “They are after me!—betrayed!” The soldier sprang at the throat of Cesarini; but the Italian, at the same instant, caught a half-burned brand from the fire, and dashed the blazing end in the face of his assailant. The soldier uttered a cry of pain, and recoiled back, blinded and dismayed. Cesarini, whose madness, when fairly roused, was of the most deadly nature, again raised his weapon, and probably nothing but death could have separated the foes; but again the bay of the dog was heard, and Cesarini, answering the sound by a wild yell, threw down the brand, and fled away through the forest with inconceivable swiftness. He hurried on through bush and dell,—and the boughs tore his garments and mangled his flesh,—but stopped not his progress till he fell at last on the ground, breathless and exhausted, and heard from some far-off clock the second hour of morning. He had left the forest; a farmhouse stood before him, and the whitened roofs of scattered cottages sloped to the tranquil sky. The witness of man—the social tranquil sky and the reasoning man—operated like a charm upon the senses which recent excitement had more than usually disturbed. The unhappy wretch gazed at the peaceful abodes, and sighed heavily; then, rising from the earth, he crept into one of the sheds that adjoined the farmhouse, and throwing himself on some straw, slept sound and quietly till daylight, and the voices of peasants in the shed awakened him.

He rose refreshed, calm, and, for ordinary purposes, sufficiently sane to prevent suspicion of his disease. He approached the startled peasants, and representing himself as a traveller who had lost his way in the night and amidst the forest, begged for food and water. Though his garments

were torn, they were new and of good fashion; his voice was mild; his whole appearance and address those of one of some station — and the French peasant is a hospitable fellow. Cesarini refreshed and rested himself an hour or two at the farm, and then resumed his wanderings; he offered no money, for the rules of the asylum forbade money to its inmates, — he had none with him; but none was expected from him, and they bade him farewell as kindly as if he had bought their blessings. He then began to consider where he was to take refuge, and how provide for himself; the feeling of liberty braced, and for a time restored, his intellect.

Fortunately, he had on his person, besides some rings of trifling cost, a watch of no inconsiderable value, the sale of which might support him, in such obscure and humble quarter as he could alone venture to inhabit, for several weeks, perhaps months. This thought made him cheerful and elated; he walked lustily on, shunning the high road. The day was clear, the sun bright, the air full of racy health. Oh, what soft raptures swelled the heart of the wanderer, as he gazed around him! The Poet and the Freeman alike stirred within his shattered heart! He paused to contemplate the berries of the icy trees, to listen to the sharp glee of the blackbird; and once — when he found beneath a hedge a cold, scentless group of hardy violets — he laughed aloud in his joy. In that laughter there was no madness, no danger; but when as he journeyed on, he passed through a little hamlet, and saw the children at play upon the ground, and heard from the open door of a cabin the sound of rustic music, then indeed he paused abruptly; the past gathered over him: *he knew that which he had been, that which he was now!* — an awful memory! a dread revelation! And, covering his face with his hands, he wept aloud. In those tears were the peril and method of madness. He woke from them to think of his youth, his hopes, of Florence, of revenge! Lumley Lord Vargrave! better, from that hour, to encounter the tiger in his lair than find thyself alone with that miserable man!

CHAPTER VI.

It seemed the laurel chaste and stubborn oak,
And all the gentle trees on earth that grew,
It seemed the land, the sea, and heaven above,
All breathed out fancy sweet, and sighed out love.

FAIRFAX'S *Tasso*.

AT De Montaigne's villa, Evelyn, for the first time, gathered from the looks, the manners, of Maltravers that she was beloved. It was no longer possible to mistake the evidences of affection. Formerly, Maltravers had availed himself of his advantage of years and experience, and would warn, admonish, dispute, even reprove; formerly, there had been so much of seeming caprice, of cold distance, of sudden and wayward haughtiness, in his bearing; but now the whole man was changed, — the Mentor had vanished in the Lover; he held his being on her breath. Her lightest pleasure seemed to have grown his law, no coldness ever alternated the deep devotion of his manner; an anxious, a timid, a watchful softness replaced all his stately self-possession. Evelyn saw that she was loved; and she then looked into her own heart.

I have said before that Evelyn was gentle, even to *yieldingness*; that her susceptibility made her shrink from the thought of pain to another: and so thoroughly did she revere Maltravers, so grateful did she feel for a love that could not but flatter pride, and raise her in her self-esteem, that she felt it impossible that she could reject his suit. "Then, do I love him as I dreamed I could love?" she asked herself; and her heart gave no intelligible reply. "Yes, it must be so; in his presence I feel a tranquil and eloquent charm; his praise delights me; his esteem is my most high ambition; — and yet — and yet —" she sighed and thought of Legard; "but *he* loved me not!" and she turned restlessly from that image. "He thinks but of the world, of pleasure; Maltravers is

right, — the spoiled children of society cannot love: why should I think of him?"

There were no guests at the villa, except Maltravers, Evelyn, and Lord and Lady Doltimore. Evelyn was much captivated by the graceful vivacity of Teresa, though that vivacity was not what it had been before her brother's affliction; their children, some of whom had grown up, constituted an amiable and intelligent family; and De Montaigne himself was agreeable and winning, despite his sober manners and his love of philosophical dispute. Evelyn often listened thoughtfully to Teresa's praises of her husband, — to her account of the happiness she had known in a marriage where there had been so great a disparity of years; Evelyn began to question the truth of her early visions of romance.

Caroline saw the unequivocal attachment of Maltravers with the same indifference with which she had anticipated the suit of Legard. It was the same to her what hand delivered Evelyn and herself from the designs of Vargrave; but Vargrave occupied nearly all her thoughts. The newspapers had reported him as seriously ill, — at one time in great danger. He was now recovering, but still unable to quit his room. He had written to her once, lamenting his ill-fortune, trusting soon to be at Paris; and touching, with evident pleasure, upon Legard's departure for Vienna, which he had seen in the "Morning Post." But he was afar — alone, ill, untended; and though Caroline's guilty love had been much abated by Vargrave's icy selfishness, by absence and remorse, still she had the heart of a woman, — and Vargrave was the only one that had ever touched it. She felt for him, and grieved in silence; she did not dare to utter sympathy aloud, for Doltimore had already given evidence of a suspicious and jealous temper.

Evelyn was also deeply affected by the account of her guardian's illness. As I before said, the moment he ceased to be her lover, her childish affection for him returned. She even permitted herself to write to him; and a tone of melancholy depression which artfully pervaded his reply struck her with something like remorse. He told her in the letter that he had much to say to her relative to an investment, in conform-

ity with her stepfather's wishes, and he should hasten to Paris, even before the doctor would sanction his removal. Vargrave forbore to mention what the meditated investment was. The last public accounts of the minister had, however, been so favourable, that his arrival might be almost daily expected; and both Caroline and Evelyn felt relieved.

To De Montaigne, Maltravers confided his attachment, and both the Frenchman and Teresa sanctioned and encouraged it. Evelyn enchanted them; and they had passed that age when they could have imagined it possible that the man they had known almost as a boy was separated by years from the lively feelings and extreme youth of Evelyn. They could not believe that the sentiments he had inspired were colder than those that animated himself.

One day, Maltravers had been absent for some hours on his solitary rambles, and De Montaigne had not yet returned from Paris, which he visited almost daily. It was so late in the noon as almost to border on evening, when Maltravers, on his return, entered the grounds by a gate that separated them from an extensive wood. He saw Evelyn, Teresa, and two of her children walking on a terrace immediately before him. He joined them; and, somehow or other, it soon chanced that Teresa and himself loitered behind the rest, a little out of hearing. "Ah, Mr. Maltravers," said the former, "we miss the soft skies of Italy and the beautiful hues of Como."

"And, for my part, I miss the youth that gave 'glory to the grass and splendour to the flower.'"

"Nay; we are happier now, believe me, — or at least I should be, if — But I must not think of my poor brother. Ah, if his guilt deprived you of one who was worthy of you, it would be some comfort to his sister to think at last that the loss was repaired. And you still have scruples?"

"Who that loves truly has not? How young, how lovely, how worthy of lighter hearts and fairer forms than mine! Give me back the years that have passed since we last met at Como, and I might hope!"

"And this to me who have enjoyed such happiness with one older, when we married, by ten years than you are now!"

"But you, Teresa, were born to see life through the Claude glass."

"Ah, you provoke me with these refinements; you turn from a happiness you have but to demand."

"Do not—do not raise my hopes too high," cried Maltravers, with great emotion; "I have been schooling myself all day. But if I *am* deceived!"

"Trust me, you are not. See, even now she turns round to look for you; she loves you, — loves you as you deserve. This difference of years that you so lament does but deepen and elevate her attachment!"

Teresa turned to Maltravers, surprised at his silence. How joyous sat his heart upon his looks, — no gloom on his brow, no doubt in his sparkling eyes! He was mortal, and he yielded to the delight of believing himself beloved. He pressed Teresa's hand in silence, and, quitting her abruptly, gained the side of Evelyn. Madame de Montaigne comprehended all that passed within him; and as she followed, she soon contrived to detach her children, and returned with them to the house on a whispered pretence of seeing if their father had yet arrived. Evelyn and Maltravers continued to walk on, — not aware, at first, that the rest of the party were not close behind.

The sun had set; and they were in a part of the grounds which, by way of contrast to the rest, was laid out in the English fashion; the walk wound, serpent-like, among a profusion of evergreens irregularly planted; the scene was shut in and bounded, except where at a distance, through an opening of the trees, you caught the spire of a distant church, over which glimmered, faint and fair, the smile of the evening star.

"This reminds me of home," said Evelyn, gently.

"And hereafter it will remind me of you," said Maltravers, in whispered accents. He fixed his eyes on her as he spoke. Never had his look been so true to his heart; never had his voice so undisguisedly expressed the profound and passionate sentiment which had sprung up within him, — to constitute, as he then believed, the latest bliss, or the crowning misery,

of his life! At that moment, it was a sort of instinct that told him they were *alone*; for who has not felt — in those few and memorable hours of life when love long suppressed overflows the fountain, and seems to pervade the whole frame and the whole spirit — that there is a magic around and within us that hath a keener intelligence than intellect itself? Alone at such an hour with the one we love, the whole world besides seems to vanish, and our feet to have entered the soil, and our lips to have caught the air, of Fairyland.

They were alone. And why did Evelyn tremble? Why did she feel that a crisis of existence was at hand?

“Miss Cameron — Evelyn,” said Maltravers, after they had walked some moments in silence, “hear me — and let your reason as well as your heart reply. From the first moment we met, you became dear to me. Yes, even when a child, your sweetness and your fortitude foretold so well what you would be in womanhood; even then you left upon my memory a delightful and mysterious shadow, — too prophetic of the light that now hallows and wraps your image! We met again, — and the attraction that had drawn me towards you years before was suddenly renewed. I love you, Evelyn! I love you better than all words can tell! Your future fate, your welfare, your happiness, contain and embody all the hopes left to me in life! But our years are different, Evelyn; I have known sorrows, — and the disappointments and the experience that have severed me from the common world have robbed me of more than time itself hath done. They have robbed me of that zest for the ordinary pleasures of our race, — which may it be yours, sweet Evelyn, ever to retain! To me, the time foretold by the Preacher as the lot of age has already arrived, when the sun and the moon are darkened, and when, save in you and through you, I have no pleasure in anything. Judge, if such a being you can love! Judge, if my very confession does not revolt and chill, if it does not present to you a gloomy and cheerless future, were it possible that you could unite your lot to mine! Answer not from friendship or from pity; the love I feel for you can have a reply from love alone, and from that reasoning which love, in

its enduring power, in its healthful confidence, in its prophetic foresight, alone supplies! I can resign you without a murmur; but I could not live with you and even fancy that you had one care I could not soothe, though you might have happiness I could not share. And fate does not present to me any vision so dark and terrible — no, not your loss itself; no, not your indifference; no, not your aversion — as your discovery, after time should make regret in vain, that you had mistaken fancy or friendship for affection, a sentiment for love. Evelyn, I have confided to you all, — all this wild heart, now and evermore your own. My destiny is with you."

Evelyn was silent; he took her hand, and her tears fell warm and fast upon it. Alarmed and anxious, he drew her towards him and gazed upon her face.

"You fear to wound me," he said, with pale lips and trembling voice. "Speak on, — I can bear all."

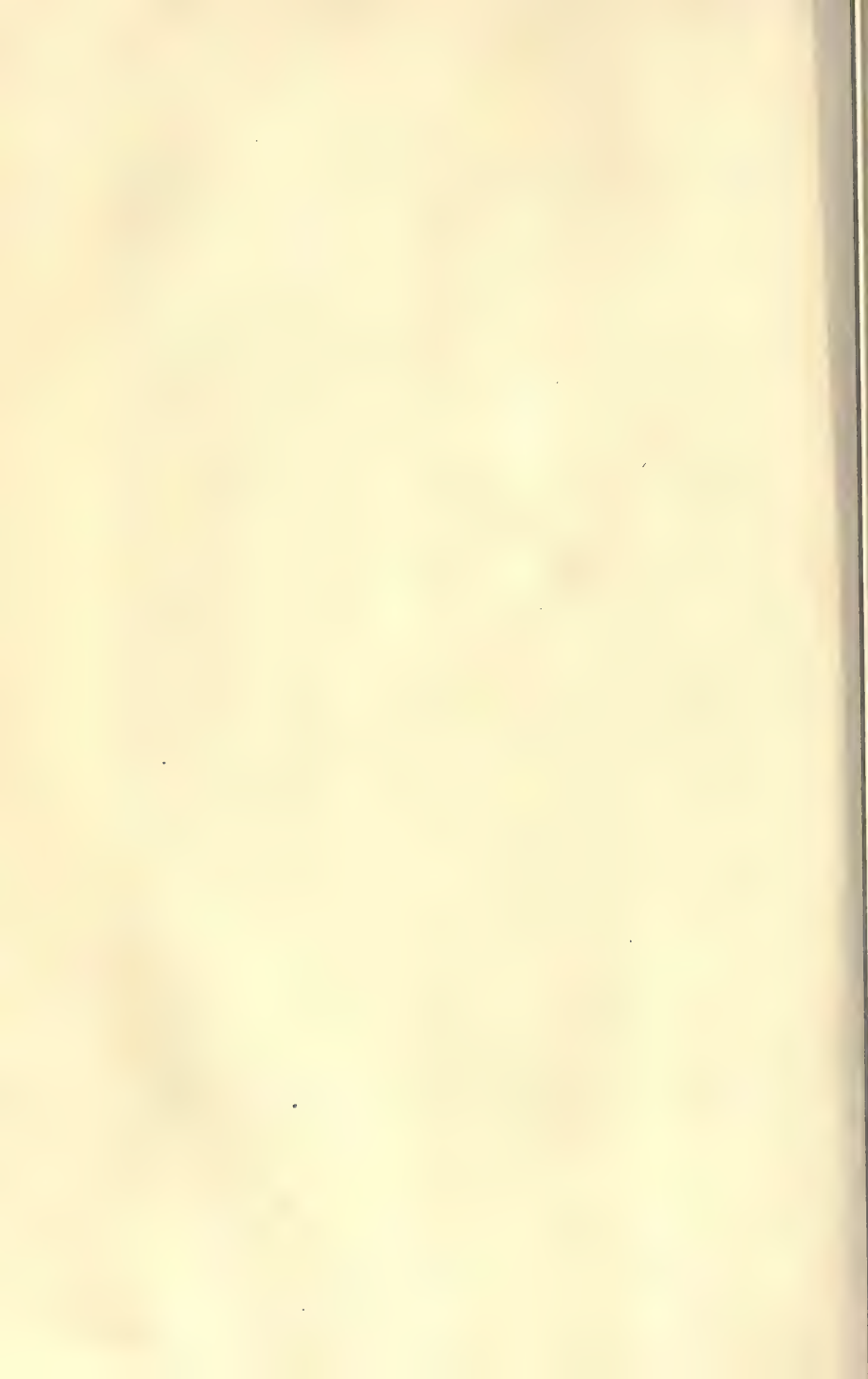
"No, no," said Evelyn, falteringly; "I have no fear but not to deserve you."

"You love me, then, — you love me!" cried Maltravers wildly, and clasping her to his heart.

The moon rose at that instant, and the wintry sward and the dark trees were bathed in the sudden light. The time — the light — so exquisite to all, even in loneliness and in sorrow — how divine in such companionship! in such overflowing and ineffable sense of bliss! There and then for the first time did Maltravers press upon that modest and blushing cheek the kiss of Love, of Hope, — the seal of a union he fondly hoped the grave itself could not dissolve!



MALTRAVERS AND EVELYN.



CHAPTER VII.

Queen. Whereon do you look ?

Hamlet. On him, on him, — look you how pale he glares ! — *Hamlet.*

PERHAPS to Maltravers those few minutes which ensued, as they walked slowly on, compensated for all the troubles and cares of years; for natures like his feel joy even yet more intensely than sorrow. It might be that the transport, the delirium of passionate and grateful thoughts that he poured forth, when at last he could summon words, expressed feelings the young Evelyn could not comprehend, and which less delighted than terrified her with the new responsibility she had incurred. But love so honest, so generous, so intense, dazzled and bewildered and carried her whole soul away. Certainly at that hour she felt no regret — no thought but that one in whom she had so long recognized something nobler than is found in the common world was thus happy and thus made happy by a word, a look from her! Such a thought is woman's dearest triumph; and one so thoroughly unselfish, so yielding, and so soft, could not be insensible to the rapture she had caused.

"And oh!" said Maltravers, as he clasped again and again the hand that he believed he had won forever, "now, at length, have I learned how beautiful is life! For this — for this I have been reserved! Heaven is merciful to me, and the waking world is brighter than all my dreams!"

He ceased abruptly. At that instant they were once more on the terrace where he had first joined Teresa, facing the wood, which was divided by a slight and low palisade from the spot where they stood. He ceased abruptly, for his eyes encountered a terrible and ominous apparition, — a form connected with dreary associations of fate and woe. The figure had raised itself upon a pile of firewood on the other side of the fence, and hence it seemed almost gigantic in its stature. It gazed upon the pair with eyes that burned with a preter-

natural blaze, and a voice which Maltravers too well remembered shrieked out "Love! love! What! *thou* love again? Where is the Dead! Ha, ha! Where is the Dead?"

Evelyn, startled by the words, looked up, and clung in speechless terror to Maltravers. He remained rooted to the spot.

"Unhappy man," said he, at length, and soothingly, "how came you hither? Fly not, you are with friends."

"Friends!" said the maniac, with a scornful laugh. "I know thee, Ernest Maltravers, — I know thee: but it is not thou who hast locked me up in darkness and in hell, side by side with the mocking fiend! Friends! ah, but no Friends shall catch me now! I am free! I am free! Air and wave are not more free!" And the madman laughed with horrible glee. "She is fair — fair," he said, abruptly checking himself, and with a changed voice, "but not so fair as the Dead. Faithless that thou art — and yet she loved *thee*! Woe to thee! woe! Maltravers, the perfidious! Woe to thee — and remorse — and shame!"

"Fear not, Evelyn, — fear not," whispered Maltravers, gently, and placing her behind him; "support your courage, — nothing shall harm you."

Evelyn, though very pale, and trembling from head to foot, retained her senses. Maltravers advanced towards the madman. But no sooner did the quick eye of the last perceive the movement, than, with the fear which belongs to that dread disease, — the fear of losing liberty, — he turned, and with a loud cry fled into the wood. Maltravers leaped over the fence, and pursued him some way in vain. The thick copses of the wood snatched every trace of the fugitive from his eye.

Breathless and exhausted, Maltravers returned to the spot where he had left Evelyn. As he reached it, he saw Teresa and her husband approaching towards him, and Teresa's merry laugh sounded clear and musical in the racy air. The sound appalled him; he hastened his steps to Evelyn.

"Say nothing of what we have seen to Madame de Montaigne, I beseech you," said he; "I will explain why hereafter."

Evelyn, too overcome to speak, nodded her acquiescence. They joined the De Montaignes, and Maltravers took the Frenchman aside.

But before he could address him, De Montaigne said, —

“Hush! do not alarm my wife — she knows nothing; but I have just heard at Paris, that — that he has escaped — you know whom I mean?”

“I do; he is at hand; send in search of him! I have seen him. Once more I have seen Castruccio Cesarini!”

BOOK IX.

Ἄλ' αἶ' ἑὸν ἡδὴ διαφανῆ. — SOPHOCLES : *Œd. Tyr.* 754.

“Woe, woe: all things are clear.”

CHAPTER I.

THE privilege that statesmen ever claim,
Who private interest never yet pursued,
But still pretended 't was for others' good.

From hence on every humorous wind that veered
With shifted sails a several course you steered.

Absalom and Achitophel, Part ii.

LORD VARGRAVE had for more than a fortnight remained at the inn at M——, too ill to be removed with safety in a season so severe. Even when at last, by easy stages, he reached London, he was subjected to a relapse; and his recovery was slow and gradual. Hitherto unused to sickness, he bore his confinement with extreme impatience; and against the commands of his physician insisted on continuing to transact his official business, and consult with his political friends in his sick-room; for Lumley knew well, that it is most pernicious to public men to be considered failing in health, —turkeys are not more unfeeling to a sick brother than politicians to an ailing statesman; they give out that his head is touched, and see paralysis and epilepsy in every speech and every despatch. The time, too, nearly ripe for his great schemes, made it doubly necessary that he should exert himself, and prevent being shelved with a plausible excuse of tender com-

passion for his infirmities. As soon therefore as he learned that Legard had left Paris, he thought himself safe for a while in that quarter, and surrendered his thoughts wholly to his ambitious projects. Perhaps, too, with the susceptible vanity of a middle-aged man, who has had his *bonnes fortunes*, Lumley deemed, with Rousseau, that a lover, pale and haggard — just raised from the bed of suffering — is more interesting to friendship than attractive to love. He and Rousseau were, I believe, both mistaken; but that is a matter of opinion: they both thought very coarsely of women, — one from having no sentiment, and the other from having a sentiment that was but a disease. At length, just as Lumley was sufficiently recovered to quit his house, to appear at his office, and declare that his illness had wonderfully improved his constitution, intelligence from Paris, the more startling from being wholly unexpected, reached him. From Caroline he learned that Maltravers had proposed to Evelyn, and been accepted. From Maltravers himself he heard the confirmation of the news. The last letter was short, but kind and manly. He addressed Lord Vargrave as Evelyn's guardian; slightly alluded to the scruples he had entertained till Lord Vargrave's suit was broken off; and feeling the subject too delicate for a letter, expressed a desire to confer with Lumley respecting Evelyn's wishes as to certain arrangements in her property.

And for this was it that Lumley had toiled! for this had he visited Lisle Court! and for this had he been stricken down to the bed of pain! Was it only to make his old rival the purchaser, if he so pleased it, of the possessions of his own family? Lumley thought at that moment less of Evelyn than of Lisle Court. As he woke from the stupor and the first fit of rage into which these epistles cast him, the recollection of the story he had heard from Mr. Onslow flashed across him. Were his suspicions true, what a secret he would possess! How fate might yet befriend him! Not a moment was to be lost. Weak, suffering as he still was, he ordered his carriage, and hastened down to Mrs. Leslie.

In the interview that took place, he was careful not to

alarm her into discretion. He managed the conference with his usual consummate dexterity. He did not appear to believe that there had been any actual connection between Alice and the supposed Butler. He began by simply asking whether Alice had ever, in early life, been acquainted with a person of that name, and when residing in the neighbourhood of —. The change of countenance, the surprised start of Mrs. Leslie, convinced him that his suspicions were true.

"And why do you ask, my lord?" said the old lady. "Is it to ascertain this point that you have done me the honour to visit me?"

"Not exactly, my dear madam," said Lumley, smiling. "But I am going to C—— on business; and besides that I wished to give an account of your health to Evelyn, whom I shall shortly see at Paris, I certainly did desire to know whether it would be any gratification to Lady Vargrave, for whom I have the deepest regard, to renew her acquaintance with the said Mr. Butler."

"What does your lordship know of him? What is he; who is he?"

"Ah, my dear lady, you turn the tables on me, I see, — for my one question you would give me fifty. But, seriously, before I answer you, you must tell me whether Lady Vargrave does know a gentleman of that name; yet, indeed, to save trouble, I may as well inform you, that I know it was under that name that she resided at C——, when my poor uncle first made her acquaintance. What I ought to ask is this, — supposing Mr. Butler be still alive, and a gentleman of character and fortune, would it please Lady Vargrave to meet with him once more?"

"I cannot tell you," said Mrs. Leslie, sinking back in her chair, much embarrassed.

"Enough, I shall not stir further in the matter. Glad to see you looking so well. Fine place, beautiful trees. Any commands at C——, or any message for Evelyn?"

Lumley rose to depart.

"Stay," said Mrs. Leslie, recalling all the pining, restless, untiring love that Lady Vargrave had manifested towards the

lost, and feeling that she ought not to sacrifice to slight scruples the chance of happiness for her friend's future years, — “stay; I think this question you should address to Lady Vargrave, — or shall I?”

“As you will, — perhaps I had better write. Good-day,” and Vargrave hurried away.

He had satisfied himself, but he had another yet to satisfy, — and that, from certain reasons known but to himself, without bringing the third person in contact with Lady Vargrave. On arriving at C—— he wrote, therefore, to Lady Vargrave as follows:—

MY DEAR FRIEND, — Do not think me impertinent or intrusive — but you know me too well for that. A gentleman of the name of Butler is exceedingly anxious to ascertain if you once lived near ——, in a pretty little cottage, — Dove, or Dale, or Dell cottage (some such appellation), — and if you remember a person of his name. Should you care to give a reply to these queries, send me a line addressed to London, which I shall get on my way to Paris.

Yours most truly,

VARGRAVE.

As soon as he had concluded, and despatched this letter, Vargrave wrote to Mr. Winsley as follows:—

MY DEAR SIR, — I am so unwell as to be unable to call on you, or even to see any one, however agreeable (nay, the more agreeable the more exciting!). I hope, however, to renew our personal acquaintance before quitting C——. Meanwhile, oblige me with a line to say if I did not understand you to signify that you could, if necessary, prove that Lady Vargrave once resided in this town as Mrs. Butler, a very short time before she married my uncle, under the name of Cameron, in Devonshire; and had she not also at that time a little girl, — an infant, or nearly so, — who must necessarily be the young lady who is my uncle's heiress, Miss Evelyn Cameron. My reason for thus troubling you is obvious. As Miss Cameron's guardian, I have very shortly to wind up certain affairs connected with my uncle's will; and, what is more, there is some property bequeathed by the late Mr. Butler, which *may* make it necessary to prove identity.

Truly yours,

VARGRAVE.

The answer to the latter communication ran thus:—

“MY LORD, — I am very sorry to hear your lordship is so unwell, and will pay my respects to-morrow. I certainly can swear that the present Lady Vargrave was the Mrs. Butler who resided at C——, and taught music. And as the child with her was of the same sex, and about the same age as Miss Cameron, there can, I should think, be no difficulty in establishing the identity between that young lady and the child Lady Vargrave had by her first husband, Mr. Butler; but of this, of course, I cannot speak.

“I have the honour, etc.”

The next morning Vargrave despatched a note to Mr. Winsley, saying that his health required him to return to town immediately, — and to town, in fact, he hastened. The day after his arrival, he received, in a hurried hand — strangely blurred and blotted, perhaps by tears — this short letter:—

For Heaven's sake, tell me what you mean! Yes, yes, I did once reside at Dale Cottage, I did know one of the name of Butler! Has *he* discovered the name *I* bear? Where is he? I implore you to write, or let me see you before you leave England!

ALICE VARGRAVE.

Lumley smiled triumphantly when he read and carefully put up this letter.

“I must now amuse and put her off — at all events for the present.”

In answer to Lady Vargrave's letter, he wrote a few lines to say that he had only heard through a third person (a lawyer) of a Mr. Butler residing somewhere abroad, who had wished these inquiries to be made; that he believed it only related to some disposition of property; that, *perhaps*, the Mr. Butler who made the inquiry was heir to the Mr. Butler she had known; that he could learn nothing else at present, as the purport of her reply must be sent abroad, — the lawyer would or could say nothing more; that directly he received a further communication it should be despatched to her, that he was most affectionately and most truly hers.

The rest of that morning Vargrave devoted to Lord Saxing-

ham and his allies; and declaring, and believing, that he should not be long absent at Paris, he took an early dinner, and was about once more to commit himself to the risks of travel, when, as he crossed the hall, Mr. Douce came hastily upon him.

"My lord — my lord — I must have a word with your l-l-lordship; — you are going to — that is —" (and the little man looked frightened) "you intend to — to go to — that is — ab-ab-ab —"

"Not abscond, Mr. Douce; come into the library: I am in a great hurry, but I have always time for *you*. What's the matter?"

"Why, then, my lord, — I — I have heard nothing m-m-more from your lordship about the pur-pur —"

"Purchase? — I am going to Paris, to settle all particulars with Miss Cameron; tell the lawyers so."

"May — may — we draw out the money to — to — show — that — that we are in earnest? Otherwise I fear — that is, I suspect — I mean I know, that Colonel Maltravers will be off the bargain."

"Why, Mr. Douce, really I must just see my ward first; but you shall hear from me in a day or two; — and the ten thousand pounds I owe you!"

"Yes, indeed, the ten — ten — ten! — my partner is very —"

"Anxious for it, no doubt! My compliments to him. God bless you! — take care of yourself, — must be off to save the packet;" and Vargrave hurried away, muttering, "Heaven sends money, and the devil sends duns!"

Douce gasped like a fish for breath, as his eyes followed the rapid steps of Vargrave; and there was an angry scowl of disappointment on his small features. Lumley, by this time, seated in his carriage, and wrapped up in his cloak, had forgotten the creditor's existence, and whispered to his aristocratic secretary, as he bent his head out of the carriage window, "I have told Lord Saxingham to despatch you to me, if there is any — the least — necessity for me in London. I leave you behind, Howard, because your sister being at

court, and your cousin with our notable premier, you will find out every change in the wind — you understand. And, I say, Howard, don't think I forget your kindness! — you know that no man ever served me in vain! Oh, there's that horrid little Douce behind you, — tell them to drive on!"

CHAPTER II.

HEARD you that ?

What prodigy of horror is disclosing ? — LILLO : *Fatal Curiosity.*

THE unhappy companion of Cesarini's flight was soon discovered and recaptured; but all search for Cesarini himself proved ineffectual, not only in the neighbourhood of St. Cloud, but in the surrounding country and in Paris. The only comfort was in thinking that his watch would at least preserve him for some time from the horrors of want; and that by the sale of the trinket, he might be traced. The police, too, were set at work, — the vigilant police of Paris! Still day rolled on day, and no tidings. The secret of the escape was carefully concealed from Teresa; and public cares were a sufficient excuse for the gloom on De Montaigne's brow.

Evelyn heard from Maltravers with mingled emotions of compassion, grief, and awe the gloomy tale connected with the history of the maniac. She wept for the fate of Florence; she shuddered at the curse that had fallen on Cesarini; and perhaps Maltravers grew dearer to her from the thought that there was so much in the memories of the past that needed a comforter and a soother.

They returned to Paris, affianced and plighted lovers; and then it was that Evelyn sought carefully and resolutely to banish from her mind all recollection, all regret, of the absent Legard: she felt the solemnity of the trust confided in her,

and she resolved that no thought of hers should ever be of a nature to gall the generous and tender spirit that had confided its life of life to her care. The influence of Maltravers over her increased in their new and more familiar position, and yet still it partook too much of veneration, too little of passion; but that might be her innocence and youth. He, at least, was sensible of no want, — she had chosen him from the world; and fastidious as he deemed himself, he reposed, without a doubt, on the security of her faith. None of those presentiments which had haunted him when first betrothed to Florence disturbed him now. The affection of one so young and so guileless seemed to bring back to him all his own youth — we are ever young while the young can love us! Suddenly, too, the world took to his eyes a brighter and fairer aspect. Hope, born again, reconciled him to his career and to his race! The more he listened to Evelyn, the more he watched every evidence of her docile but generous nature, the more he felt assured that he had found at last a heart suited to his own. Her beautiful serenity of temper, cheerful, yet never fitful or unquiet, gladdened him with its insensible contagion. To be with Evelyn was like basking in the sunshine of some happy sky! It was an inexpressible charm to one wearied with “the hack sights and sounds” of this jaded world, — to watch the ever-fresh and sparkling thoughts and fancies which came from a soul so new to life! It enchanted one, painfully fastidious in what relates to the true nobility of character, that, however various the themes discussed, no low or mean thought ever sullied those beautiful lips. It was not the mere innocence of inexperience, but the moral incapability of guile, that charmed him in the companion he had chosen on his path to Eternity! He was also delighted to notice Evelyn’s readiness of resources: she had that faculty, without which woman has no independence from the world, no pledge that domestic retirement will not soon languish into wearisome monotony, — the faculty of making trifles contribute to occupation or amusement; she was easily pleased, and yet she so soon reconciled herself to disappointment. He felt, and chid his own dulness for not feeling it

before, that, young and surpassingly lovely as she was, she required no stimulant from the heated pursuits and the hollow admiration of the crowd.

"Such," thought he, "are the natures that alone can preserve through years the poetry of the first passionate illusion, that can alone render wedlock the seal that confirms affection, and not the mocking ceremonial that vainly consecrates its grave!"

Maltravers, as we have seen, formally wrote to Lumley some days after their return to Paris. He would have written also to Lady Vargrave, but Evelyn thought it best to prepare her mother by a letter from herself.

Miss Cameron now wanted but a few weeks to the age of eighteen, at which she was to be the sole mistress of her own destiny. On arriving at that age the marriage was to take place. Valerie heard with sincere delight of the new engagement her friend had formed. She eagerly sought every opportunity to increase her intimacy with Evelyn, who was completely won by her graceful kindness; the result of Valerie's examination was, that she did not wonder at the passionate love of Maltravers, but that her deep knowledge of the human heart (that knowledge so remarkable in the women of her country!) made her doubt how far it was adequately returned, how far Evelyn deceived herself. Her first satisfaction became mingled with anxiety, and she relied more for the future felicity of her friend on Evelyn's purity of thought and general tenderness of heart than on the exclusiveness and ardour of her love. Alas! few at eighteen are not too young for the irrevocable step, — and Evelyn was younger than her years! One evening at Madame de Ventadour's Maltravers asked Evelyn if she had yet heard from Lady Vargrave. Evelyn expressed her surprise that she had not, and the conversation fell, as was natural, upon Lady Vargrave herself. "Is she as fond of music as you are?" asked Maltravers.

"Yes, indeed, I think so — and of the songs of a certain person in particular; they always had for her an indescribable charm. Often have I heard her say that to read your writings was like talking to an early friend. Your name and

genius seemed to make her solitary connection with the great world. Nay — but you will not be angry — I half think it was her enthusiasm, so strange and rare, that first taught me interest in yourself.”

“I have a double reason, then, for loving your mother,” said Maltravers, much pleased and flattered. “And does she not like Italian music?”

“Not much; she prefers some rather old-fashioned German airs, very simple, but very touching.”

“My own early passion,” said Maltravers, more and more interested.

“But there are also one or two English songs which I have occasionally, but very seldom, heard her sing. One in especial affects her so deeply, even when she plays the air, that I have always attached to it a certain mysterious sanctity. I should not like to sing it before a crowd, but to-morrow, when you call on me, and we are alone —”

“Ah, to-morrow I will not fail to remind you.”

Their conversation ceased; yet, somehow or other, that night when he retired to rest the recollection of it haunted Maltravers. He felt a vague, unaccountable curiosity respecting this secluded and solitary mother; all concerning her early fate seemed so wrapped in mystery. Cleveland, in reply to his letter, had informed him that all inquiries respecting the birth and first marriage of Lady Vargrave had failed. Evelyn evidently knew but little of either, and he felt a certain delicacy in pressing questions which might be ascribed to the inquisitiveness of a vulgar family pride. Moreover, lovers have so much to say to each other, that he had not time to talk at length to Evelyn about third persons. He slept ill that night, — dark and boding dreams disturbed his slumber. He rose late and dejected by presentiments he could not master: his morning meal was scarcely over, and he had already taken his hat to go to Evelyn’s for comfort and sunshine, when the door opened, and he was surprised by the entrance of Lord Vargrave.

Lumley seated himself with a formal gravity very unusual to him, and as if anxious to waive unnecessary explanations,

began as follows, with a serious and impressive voice and aspect:—

“Maltravers, of late years we have been estranged from each other. I do not presume to dictate to you your friendships or your dislikes. Why this estrangement has happened you alone can determine. For my part I am conscious of no offence; that which I was I am still. It is you who have changed. Whether it be the difference of our political opinions, or any other and more secret cause, I know not. I lament, but it is now too late to attempt to remove it. If you suspect me of ever seeking, or even wishing, to sow dissension between yourself and my ill-fated cousin, now no more, you are mistaken. I ever sought the happiness and union of you both. And yet, Maltravers, you then came between me and an early and cherished dream. But I suffered in silence; my course was at least disinterested, perhaps generous: let it pass. A second time you cross my path,—you win from me a heart I had long learned to consider mine. You have no scruple of early friendship, you have no forbearance towards acknowledged and affianced ties. You are my rival with Evelyn Cameron, and your suit has prospered.”

“Vargrave,” said Maltravers, “you have spoken frankly; and I will reply with an equal candour. A difference of tastes, tempers, and opinions led us long since into opposite paths. I am one who cannot disunite public morality from private virtue. From motives best known to you, but which I say openly I hold to have been those of interest or ambition, you did not change your opinions (there is no sin in that), but retaining them in private, professed others in public, and played with the destinies of mankind as if they were but counters to mark a mercenary game. This led me to examine your character with more searching eyes; and I found it one I could no longer trust. With respect to the Dead, let the pall drop over that early grave,—I acquit you of all blame. He who sinned has suffered more than would atone the crime! You charge me with my love to Evelyn. Pardon me, but I seduced no affection, I have broken no tie. Not till she was free in heart and in hand to choose between

us, did I hint at love. Let me think that a way may be found to soften one portion at least of the disappointment you cannot but feel acutely."

"Stay!" said Lord Vargrave (who, plunged in a gloomy revery, had scarcely seemed to hear the last few sentences of his rival): "stay, Maltravers. Speak not of love to Evelyn! A horrible foreboding tells me that, a few hours hence, you would rather pluck out your tongue by the roots than couple the words of love with the thought of that unfortunate girl! Oh, if I were vindictive, what awful triumph would await me now! What retaliation on your harsh judgment, your cold contempt, your momentary and wretched victory over me! Heaven is my witness, that my only sentiment is that of terror and woe! Maltravers, in your earliest youth, did you form connection with one whom they called Alice Darvil?"

"Alice! merciful Heaven! what of her?"

"Did you never know that the Christian name of Evelyn's mother is Alice?"

"I never asked, I never knew; but it is a common name," faltered Maltravers.

"Listen to me," resumed Vargrave: "with Alice Darvil you lived in the neighbourhood of —, did you not?"

"Go on, go on!"

"You took the name of Butler; by that name Alice Darvil was afterwards known in the town in which my uncle resided — there are gaps in the history that I cannot of my own knowledge fill up, — she taught music; my uncle became enamoured of her, but he was vain and worldly. She removed into Devonshire, and he married her there, under the name of Cameron, by which name he hoped to conceal from the world the lowness of her origin, and the humble calling she had followed. Hold! do not interrupt me. Alice had one daughter, as was supposed, by a former marriage; that daughter was the offspring of him whose name she bore — yes, of the false Butler! — that daughter is Evelyn Cameron!"

"Liar! devil!" cried Maltravers, springing to his feet, as if a shot had pierced his heart. "Proofs! proofs!"

"Will these suffice?" said Vargrave, as he drew forth the letters of Winsley and Lady Vargrave. Maltravers took them, but it was some moments before he could dare to read. He supported himself with difficulty from falling to the ground; there was a gurgle in his throat like the sound of the death-rattle; at last he read, and dropped the letters from his hand.

"Wait me here," he said very faintly, and moved mechanically to the door.

"Hold!" said Lord Vargrave, laying his hand upon Ernest's arm. "Listen to me for Evelyn's sake, for her mother's. You are about to seek Evelyn,—be it so! I know that you possess the god-like gift of self-control. You will not suffer her to learn that her mother has done that which dishonours alike mother and child? You will not consummate your wrong to Alice Darvil by robbing her of the fruit of a life of penitence and remorse? You will not unveil her shame to her own daughter? Convince yourself, and master yourself while you do so!"

"Fear me not," said Maltravers, with a terrible smile; "I will not afflict my conscience with a double curse. As I have sowed, so must I reap. Wait me here!"



CHAPTER III.

. . . MISERY

That gathers force each moment as it rolls,

And must, at last, o'erwhelm me. — LILLO: *Fatal Curiosity*.

MALTRAVERS found Evelyn alone; she turned towards him with her usual sweet smile of welcome; but the smile vanished at once, as her eyes met his changed and working countenance; cold drops stood upon the rigid and marble brow, the lips writhed as if in bodily torture, the muscles of the face had

fallen, and there was a wildness which appalled her in the fixed and feverish brightness of the eyes.

"You are ill, Ernest, — dear Ernest, you are ill, — your look freezes me!"

"Nay, Evelyn," said Maltravers, recovering himself by one of those efforts of which men who have *suffered without sympathy* are alone capable, — "nay, I am better now; I have been ill — very ill — but I am better!"

"Ill! and I not know of it?" She attempted to take his hand as she spoke. Maltravers recoiled.

"It is fire! it burns! Avaunt!" he cried, frantically. "O Heaven! spare me, spare me!"

Evelyn was not seriously alarmed; she gazed on him with the tenderest compassion. Was this one of those moody and overwhelming paroxysms to which it had been whispered abroad that he was subject? Strange as it may seem, despite her terror, he was dearer to her in that hour — as she believed, of gloom and darkness — than in all the glory of his majestic intellect, or all the blandishments of his soft address.

"What has happened to you?" she said, approaching him again; "have you seen Lord Vargrave? I know that he has arrived, for his servant has been here to say so; has he uttered anything to distress you? or has —" (she added falteringly and timidly) — "has poor Evelyn offended you? Speak to me, — only speak!"

Maltravers turned, and his face was now calm and serene: save by its extreme and almost ghastly paleness, no trace of the hell within him could be discovered.

"Pardon me," said he, gently, "I know not this morning what I say or do; think not of it, think not of me, — it will pass away when I hear your voice."

"Shall I sing to you the words I spoke of last night? See, I have them ready; I know them by heart, but I thought you might like to read them, they are so full of simple but deep feeling."

Maltravers took the song from her hands, and bent over the paper; at first, the letters seemed dim and indistinct, for there was a mist before his eyes; but at last a chord of mem-

ory was struck, — he recalled the words: they were some of those he had composed for Alice in the first days of their delicious intercourse, — links of the golden chain, in which he had sought to bind the spirit of knowledge to that of love.

“And from whom,” said he, in a faint voice, as he calmly put down the verses, — “from whom did your mother learn these words?”

“I know not; some dear friend, years ago, composed and gave them to her. It must have been one very dear to her, to judge by the effect they still produce.”

“Think you,” said Maltravers, in a hollow voice, “think you IT WAS YOUR FATHER?”

“My father! She never speaks of him! I have been early taught to shun all allusion to his memory. My father! — it is probable; yes, it may have been my father; whom else could she have loved so fondly?”

There was a long silence; Evelyn was the first to break it.

“I have heard from my mother to-day, Ernest; her letter alarms me, — I scarce know why!”

“Ah! and how —”

“It is hurried and incoherent, — almost wild: she says she has learned some intelligence that has unsettled and unstrung her mind; she has requested me to inquire if any one I am acquainted with has heard of, or met abroad, some person of the name of Butler. You start! — have you known one of that name?”

“I! — did your mother never allude to that name before?”

“Never! — and yet, once I remember —”

“What?”

“That I was reading an account in the papers of the sudden death of some Mr. Butler; and her agitation made a powerful and strange impression upon me, — in fact, she fainted, and seemed almost delirious when she recovered; she would not rest till I had completed the account, and when I came to the particulars of his age, etc. (he was old, I think) she clasped her hands, and wept; but they seemed tears of joy. The name is so common — whom of that name have you known?”

"It is no matter. Is that your mother's letter; is that her handwriting?"

"Yes;" and Evelyn gave the letter to Maltravers. He glanced over the characters; he had once or twice seen Lady Vargrave's handwriting before, and had recognized no likeness between that handwriting and such early specimens of Alice's art as he had witnessed so many years ago; but now, "trifles light as air" had grown "confirmation strong as proof of Holy Writ," — he thought he detected Alice in every line of the hurried and blotted scroll; and when his eye rested on the words, "Your affectionate MOTHER, *Alice!*" his blood curdled in his veins.

"It is strange!" said he, still struggling for self-composure; "strange that I never thought of asking her name before! Alice! her name is Alice?"

"A sweet name, is it not? It accords so well with her simple character — how you would love her!"

As she said this, Evelyn turned to Maltravers with enthusiasm, and again she was startled by his aspect; for again it was haggard, distorted, and convulsed.

"Oh, if you love me," she cried, "do send immediately for advice! And yet, is it illness, Ernest, or is it some grief that you hide from me?"

"It is illness, Evelyn," said Maltravers, rising: and his knees knocked together. "I am not fit even for your companionship, — I will go home."

"And send instantly for advice?"

"Ay; it waits me there already."

"Thank Heaven! and you will write to me one little word — to relieve me? I am so uneasy!"

"I will write to you."

"This evening?"

"Ay!"

"Now go, — I will not detain you."

He walked slowly to the door, but when he reached it he turned, and catching her anxious gaze, he opened his arms; overpowered with strange fear and affectionate sympathy, she burst into passionate tears; and surprised out of the timid

and reserve which had hitherto characterized her pure and meek attachment to him, she fell on his breast, and sobbed aloud. Maltravers raised his hands, and, placing them solemnly on her young head, his lips muttered as if in prayer. He paused, and strained her to his heart; but he shunned that parting kiss, which, hitherto, he had so fondly sought. That embrace was one of agony, and not of rapture; and yet Evelyn dreamed not that he designed it for the last!

Maltravers re-entered the room in which he had left Lord Vargrave, who still awaited his return.

He walked up to Lumley, and held out his hand. "You have saved me from a dreadful crime, — from an everlasting remorse. I thank you!"

Hardened and frigid as his nature was, Lumley was touched; the movement of Maltravers took him by surprise. "It has been a dreadful duty, Ernest," said he, pressing the hand he held; "but to come, too, from *me*, — your rival!"

"Proceed, proceed, I pray you; explain all this — yet explanation! what do I want to know? Evelyn is my daughter, — Alice's child! For Heaven's sake, give me hope; say it is not so; say that she is Alice's child, but not *mine*! Father! father! — and they call it a holy name — it is a horrible one!"

"Compose yourself, my dear friend: recollect what you have escaped! You will recover this shock. Time, travel —"

"Peace, man, — peace! Now then I am calm! When Alice left me she had no child. I knew not that she bore within her the pledge of our ill-omened and erring love. Verily, the sins of my youth have arisen against me; and the curse has come home to roost!"

"I cannot explain to you all details."

"But why not have told me of this? Why not have warned me; why not have said to me, when my heart could have been satisfied by so sweet a tie, 'Thou hast a daughter: thou art not desolate'? Why reserve the knowledge of the blessing until it has turned to poison? Fiend that you are! you have waited this hour to gloat over the agony from which a word from you

a year, nay, a month ago — a little month ago — might have saved me and her!”

Maltravers, as he spoke, approached Vargrave, with eyes sparkling with fierce passion, his hand clenched, his form dilated, the veins on his forehead swelled like cords. Lumley, brave as he was, recoiled.

“I knew not of this secret,” said he, deprecatingly, “till a few days before I came hither; and I came hither at once to disclose it to you. Will you listen to me? I knew that my uncle had married a person much beneath him in rank; but he was guarded and cautious, and I knew no more, except that by a first husband that lady had one daughter, — Evelyn. A chain of accidents suddenly acquainted me with the rest.”

Here Vargrave pretty faithfully repeated what he had learned from the brewer at C——, and from Mr. Onslow; but when he came to the tacit confirmation of all his suspicions received from Mrs. Leslie, he greatly exaggerated and greatly distorted the account. “Judge, then,” concluded Lumley, “of the horror with which I heard that you had declared an attachment to Evelyn, and that it was returned. Ill as I was, I hastened hither: you know the rest. Are you satisfied?”

“I will go to Alice! I will learn from her own lips — yet, how can I meet her again? How say to her, ‘I have taken from thee thy last hope, — I have broken thy child’s heart’?”

“Forgive me, but I should confess to you, that, from all I can learn from Mrs. Leslie, Lady Vargrave has but one prayer, one hope in life, — that she may never again meet with her betrayer. You may, indeed, in her own letter perceive how much she is terrified by the thought of your discovering her. She has, at length, recovered peace of mind and tranquillity of conscience. She shrinks with dread from the prospect of ever again encountering one once so dear, now associated in her mind with recollections of guilt and sorrow. More than this, she is sensitively alive to the fear of shame, to the dread of detection. If ever her daughter were to know her sin, it would be to her as a death-blow. Yet in her nervous state of health, her ever-quick and uncontrollable feelings, if you

were to meet her, she would disguise nothing, conceal nothing. The veil would be torn aside: the menials in her own house would tell the tale, and curiosity circulate, and scandal blacken the story of her early errors. No, Maltravers, at least wait awhile before you see her; wait till her mind can be prepared for such an interview, till precautions can be taken, till you yourself are in a calmer state of mind."

Maltravers fixed his piercing eyes on Lumley while he thus spoke, and listened in deep attention.

"It matters not," said he, after a long pause, "whether these be your real reasons for wishing to defer or prevent a meeting between Alice and myself. The affliction that has come upon me bursts with too clear and scorching a blaze of light for me to see any chance of escape or mitigation. Even if Evelyn were the daughter of Alice by another, she would be forever separated from me. The mother and the child! there is a kind of incest even in that thought! But such an alleviation of my anguish is forbidden to my reason. No, poor Alice, I will not disturb the repose thou hast won at last! Thou shalt never have the grief to know that our error has brought upon thy lover so black a doom! All is over! the world never shall find me again. Nothing is left for me but the desert and the grave!"

"Speak not so, Ernest," said Lord Vargrave, soothingly; "a little while, and you will recover this blow: your control over passion has, even in youth, inspired me with admiration and surprise; and now, in calmer years, and with such incentives to self-mastery, your triumph will come sooner than you think. Evelyn, too, is so young; she has not known you long; perhaps her love, after all, is that caused by some mystic, but innocent working of nature, and she would rejoice to call you 'father.' Happy years are yet in store for you."

Maltravers did not listen to these vain and hollow consolations. With his head drooping on his bosom, his whole form unnerved, the large tears rolling unheeded down his cheeks, he seemed the very picture of a broken-hearted man, whom fate never again could raise from despair. He, who had, for

years, so cased himself in pride, on whose very front was engraved the victory over passion and misfortune, whose step had trod the earth in the royalty of the conqueror; the veriest slave that crawls bore not a spirit more humbled, fallen, or subdued! He who had looked with haughty eyes on the infirmities of others, who had disdained to serve his race because of their human follies and partial frailties, — *he*, even *he*, the Pharisee of Genius, — had but escaped by a chance, and by the hand of the man he suspected and despised, from a crime at which nature herself recoils, — which all law, social and divine, stigmatizes as inexpiable, which the sternest imagination of the very heathen had invented as the gloomiest catastrophe that can befall the wisdom and the pride of mortals! But one step farther, and the fabulous Œdipus had not been more accursed!

Such thoughts as these, unformed, confused, but strong enough to bow him to the dust, passed through the mind of this wretched man. He had been familiar with grief, he had been dull to enjoyment; sad and bitter memories had consumed his manhood: but pride had been left him still; and he had dared in his secret heart to say, "I can defy Fate!" Now the bolt had fallen; Pride was shattered into fragments, Self-abasement was his companion, Shame sat upon his prostrate soul. The Future had no hope left in store. Nothing was left for him but to die!

Lord Vargrave gazed at him in real pain, in sincere compassion; for his nature, wily, deceitful, perfidious though it was, had cruelty only so far as was necessary to the unrelenting execution of his schemes. No pity could swerve him from a purpose; but he had enough of the *man* within him to feel pity not the less, even for his own victim! At length Maltravers lifted his head, and waved his hand gently to Lord Vargrave.

"All is now explained," said he, in a feeble voice; "our interview is over. I must be alone; I have yet to collect my reason, to commune calmly and deliberately with myself; I have to write to her—to invent, to lie,—I, who believed I could never, never utter, even to an enemy, what was false!

And I must not soften the blow to her. I must not utter a word of love, — love, it is incest! I must endeavour brutally to crush out the very affection I created! She must hate me! — oh, *teach* her to hate me! Blacken my name, traduce my motives, — let her believe them levity or perfidy, what you will. So will she forget me the sooner; so will she the easier bear the sorrow which the father brings upon the child. And *she* has not sinned! O Heaven, the sin was mine! Let my punishment be a sacrifice that Thou wilt accept for her!”

Lord Vargrave attempted again to console; but this time the words died upon his lips. His arts failed him. Maltravers turned impatiently away and pointed to the door.

“I will see you again,” said he, “before I quit Paris; leave your address below.”

Vargrave was not, perhaps, unwilling to terminate a scene so painful: he muttered a few incoherent words, and abruptly withdrew. He heard the door locked behind him as he departed. Ernest Maltravers was alone! — what a solitude!

CHAPTER IV.

PRY me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold. — *Hamlet*.

LETTER FROM ERNEST MALTRAVERS TO EVELYN CAMERON.

EVELYN!

All that you have read of faithlessness and perfidy will seem tame to you when compared with that conduct which you are doomed to meet from me. We must part, and forever. We have seen each other for the last time. It is bootless even to ask the cause. Believe that I am fickle, false, heartless, — that a whim has changed me, if you will. My resolve is unalterable. We meet no more even as friends. I do not ask you either to forgive or to remember me. Look on

me as one wholly unworthy even of resentment! Do not think that I write this in madness or in fever or excitement. Judge me not by my seeming illness this morning. I invent no excuse, no extenuation, for my broken faith and perjured vows. Calmly, coldly, and deliberately I write; and thus writing, I renounce your love.

This language is wanton cruelty, — it is fiendish insult, — is it not, Evelyn? Am I not a villain? Are you not grateful for your escape? Do you not look on the past with a shudder at the precipice on which you stood?

I have done with this subject, — I turn to another. We are parted, Evelyn, and forever. Do not fancy, — I repeat, do not fancy that there is any error, any strange infatuation on my mind, that there is any possibility that the sentence can be annulled. It were almost easier to call the dead from the grave than bring us again together, as we were and as we hoped to be. Now that you are convinced of that truth, learn, as soon as you have recovered the first shock of knowing how much wickedness there is on earth, — learn to turn to the future for happier and more suitable ties than those you could have formed with me. You are very young; in youth our first impressions are lively but evanescent, — you will wonder hereafter at having fancied you loved me. Another and a fairer image will replace mine. This is what I desire and pray for. *As soon as I learn that you love another, that you are wedded to another, I will re-appear in the world; till then, I am a wanderer and an exile. Your hand alone can efface from my brow the brand of Cain!* When I am gone, Lord Vargrave will probably renew his suit. I would rather you married one of your own years, — one whom you could love fondly, one who would chase away every remembrance of the wretch who now forsakes you. But perhaps I have mistaken Lord Vargrave's character; perhaps he may be worthier of you than I deemed (*I who set up for the censor of other men!*); perhaps he may both win and deserve your affection.

Evelyn, farewell! God, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, will watch over you!

ERNEST MALTRAVERS.

CHAPTER V.

OUR acts our angels are, or good or ill,

The fatal shadows that walk by us still. — JOHN FLETCHER.

THE next morning came; the carriage was at the door of Maltravers, to bear him away he cared not whither. Where could he fly from memory? He had just despatched the letter to Evelyn, — a letter studiously written for the object of destroying all the affection to which he had so fondly looked as the last charm of life. He was now only waiting for Vargrave, to whom he had sent, and who hastened to obey the summons.

When Lumley arrived, he was shocked at the alteration which a single night had effected in the appearance of Maltravers; but he was surprised and relieved to find him calm and self-possessed.

"Vargrave," said Maltravers, "whatever our past coldness, henceforth I owe to you an eternal gratitude; and henceforth this awful secret makes between us an indissoluble bond. If I have understood you rightly, neither Alice nor other living being than yourself know that in me, Ernest Maltravers, stands the guilty object of Alice's first love. Let that secret still be kept; relieve Alice's mind from the apprehension of learning that the man who betrayed her yet lives: he will not live long! I leave time and method of explanation to your own judgment and acuteness. Now for Evelyn." Here Maltravers stated generally the tone of the letter he had written. Vargrave listened thoughtfully.

"Maltravers," said he, "it is right to try first the effect of your letter. But if it fail, if it only serve to inflame the imagination and excite the interest, if Evelyn still continue to love you, if that love preys upon her, if it should undermine health and spirit, if it should destroy her?"

Maltravers groaned. Lumley proceeded: "I say this not to wound you, but to provide against all circumstances. I too have spent the night in revolving what is best to be done in such a case; and this is the plan I have formed. Let us, if need be, tell the truth to Evelyn, robbing the truth only of its shame. Nay, nay, listen. Why not say that under a borrowed name and in the romance of early youth you knew and loved Alice (though in innocence and honour)? Your tender age, the difference of rank, forbade your union. Her father, discovering your clandestine correspondence, suddenly removed her from the country, and destroyed all clew for your inquiries. You lost sight of each other, — each was taught to believe the other dead. Alice was compelled by her father to marry Mr. Cameron; and after his death, her poverty and her love for her only child induced her to accept my uncle. You have now learned all, — have learned that Evelyn is the daughter of your first love, the daughter of one who adores you still, and whose life your remembrance has for so many years embittered. Evelyn herself will at once comprehend all the scruples of a delicate mind; Evelyn herself will recoil from the thought of making the child the rival to the mother. She will understand why you have flown from her; she will sympathize with your struggles; she will recall the constant melancholy of Alice; she will hope that the ancient love may be renewed, and efface all grief; Generosity and Duty alike will urge her to conquer her own affection! And hereafter, when time has restored you both, father and child may meet with such sentiments as father and child may own!"

Maltravers was silent for some minutes; at length he said abruptly, "And you really loved her, Vargrave, — you love her still? Your dearest care must be her welfare."

"It is! indeed, it is!"

"Then I must trust to your discretion; I can have no other confidant; I myself am not fit to judge. My mind is darkened — you may be right — I think so."

"One word more, — she may discredit my tale, if unsupported. Will you write one line to me to say that I am authorized to reveal the secret, and that it is known only to

me? I will not use it unless I should think it absolutely required."

Hastily and mechanically Maltravers wrote a few words to the effect of what Lumley had suggested. "I will inform you," he said to Vargrave as he gave him the paper, "of whatever spot may become my asylum; and you can communicate to me all that I dread and long to hear; but let no man know the refuge of despair!"

There was positively a tear in Vargrave's cold eye, — the only tear that had glistened there for many years; he paused irresolute, then advanced, again halted, muttered to himself, and turned aside.

"As for the world," Lumley resumed, after a pause, "your engagement has been public, — some public account of its breach must be invented. You have always been considered a proud man; we will say that it was low birth on the side of both mother and father (the last only just discovered) that broke off the alliance!"

Vargrave was talking to the deaf; what cared Maltravers for the world? He hastened from the room, threw himself into his carriage, and Vargrave was left to plot, to hope, and to aspire.

BOOK X.

Ὀδὸν Ὀνειρον. — HOMER, I, 3.

“A dream!”

CHAPTER I.

QUALIS ubi in lucem coluber

. . . Mala gramina pastus.¹ — VIRGIL.

Pars minima est ipsa puella sui.² — OVID.

It would be superfluous, and, perhaps, a sickening task, to detail at length the mode and manner in which Vargrave coiled his snares round the unfortunate girl whom his destiny had marked out for his prey. He was right in foreseeing that, after the first amazement caused by the letter of Maltravers, Evelyn would feel resentment crushed beneath her certainty of his affection her incredulity at his self-accusations, and her secret conviction that some reverse, some misfortune he was unwilling she should share, was the occasion of his farewell and flight. Vargrave therefore very soon communicated to Evelyn the tale he had suggested to Maltravers. He reminded her of the habitual sorrow, the evidence of which was so visible in Lady Vargrave; of her indifference to the pleasures of the world; of her sensitive shrinking from all recurrence to her early fate. “The secret of this,” said he, “is in a youthful and most fervent attachment; your mother loved a young stranger above her in rank,

¹ “As when a snake glides into light, having fed on pernicious pastures.”

² “The girl is the least part of himself.”

who (his head being full of German romance) was then roaming about the country on pedestrian and adventurous excursions, under the assumed name of Butler. By him she was most ardently beloved in return. Her father, perhaps, suspected the rank of her lover, and was fearful of her honour being compromised. He was a strange man, that father! and I know not his real character and motives; but he suddenly withdrew his daughter from the suit and search of her lover, — they saw each other no more; her lover mourned her as one dead. In process of time your mother was constrained by her father to marry Mr. Cameron, and was left a widow with an only child, — yourself: she was poor, — very poor! and her love and anxiety for you at last induced her to listen to the addresses of my late uncle; for your sake she married again; again death dissolved the tie! But still, unceasingly and faithfully, she recalled that first love, the memory of which darkened and embittered all her life, and still she lived upon the hope to meet with the lost again. At last, and most recently, it was my fate to discover that the object of this unconquerable affection lived, — was still free in hand if not in heart: you behold the lover of your mother in Ernest Maltravers! It devolved on me (an invidious — a reluctant duty) to inform Maltravers of the identity of Lady Vargrave with the Alice of his boyish passion; to prove to him her suffering, patient, unsubdued affection; to convince him that the sole hope left to her in life was that of one day or other beholding him once again. You know Maltravers, — his high-wrought, sensitive, noble character; he recoiled in terror from the thought of making his love to the daughter the last and bitterest affliction to the mother he had so loved; knowing too how completely that mother had entwined herself round your affections, he shuddered at the pain and self-reproach that would be yours when you should discover to whom you had been the rival, and whose the fond hopes and dreams that your fatal beauty had destroyed. Tortured, despairing, and half beside himself, he has fled from this ill-omened passion, and in solitude he now seeks to subdue that passion. Touched by the woe, the grief, of the Alice of his youth, it is his inten-

tion, as soon as he can know you restored to happiness and content, to hasten to your mother, and offer his future devotion as the fulfilment of former vows. On you, and you alone, it depends to restore Maltravers to the world, — on you alone it depends to bless the remaining years of the mother who so dearly loves you!”

It may be easily conceived with what sensations of wonder, compassion, and dismay, Evelyn listened to this tale, the progress of which her exclamations, her sobs, often interrupted. She would write instantly to her mother, to Maltravers. Oh, how gladly she would relinquish his suit! How cheerfully promise to rejoice in that desertion which brought happiness to the mother she had so loved!

“Nay,” said Vargrave, “your mother must not know, till the intelligence can be breathed by his lips, and softened by his protestations of returning affection, that the mysterious object of her early romance is that Maltravers whose vows have been so lately offered to her own child. Would not such intelligence shock all pride, and destroy all hope? How could she then consent to the sacrifice which Maltravers is prepared to make? No! not till you are another’s — not (to use the words of Maltravers) till you are a happy and beloved wife — must your mother receive the returning homage of Maltravers; not till then can she know where that homage has been recently rendered; not till then can Maltravers feel justified in the atonement he meditates. He is willing to sacrifice himself; he trembles at the thought of sacrificing you! Say nothing to your mother, till from her own lips she tells you that she has learned all.”

Could Evelyn hesitate; could Evelyn doubt? To allay the fears, to fulfil the prayers of the man whose conduct appeared so generous, to restore him to peace and the world; above all, to pluck from the heart of that beloved and gentle mother the rankling dart, to shed happiness over her fate, to reunite her with the loved and lost, — what sacrifice too great for this?

Ah, why was Legard absent? Why did she believe him capricious, light, and false? Why had she shut her softest thoughts from her soul? But he — the true lover — was afar,

and his true love unknown! and Vargrave, the watchful serpent, was at hand.

In a fatal hour, and in the transport of that enthusiasm which inspires alike our more rash and our more sublime deeds, which makes us alike dupes and martyrs, — the enthusiasm that tramples upon self, that forfeits all things to a high-wrought zeal for others, Evelyn consented to become the wife of Vargrave! Nor was she at first sensible of the sacrifice, — sensible of anything but the glow of a noble spirit and an approving conscience. Yes, thus, and thus alone, did she obey both duties, — that, which she had well-nigh abandoned, to her dead benefactor, and that to the living mother. Afterwards came a dread reaction; and then, at last, that passive and sleep-like resignation, which is Despair under a milder name. Yes, — such a lot had been predestined from the first; in vain had she sought to fly it: Fate had overtaken her, and she must submit to the decree!

She was most anxious that the intelligence of the new bond might be transmitted instantly to Maltravers. Vargrave promised, but took care not to perform. He was too acute not to know that in so sudden a step Evelyn's motives would be apparent, and his own suit indelicate and ungenerous. He was desirous that Maltravers should learn nothing till the vows had been spoken, and the indissoluble chain forged. Afraid to leave Evelyn, even for a day, afraid to trust her in England to an interview with her mother, — he remained at Paris, and hurried on all the requisite preparations. He sent to Douce, who came in person, with the deeds necessary for the transfer of the money for the purchase of Lisle Court, which was now to be immediately completed. The money was to be lodged in Mr. Douce's bank till the lawyers had completed their operations; and in a few weeks, when Evelyn had attained the allotted age, Vargrave trusted to see himself lord alike of the betrothed bride, and the hereditary lands of the crushed Maltravers. He refrained from stating to Evelyn who was the present proprietor of the estate to become hers; he foresaw all the objections she would form; — and, indeed, she was unable to think, to talk, of such matters. One

favour she had asked, and it had been granted, — that she was to be left unmolested to her solitude till the fatal day. Shut up in her lonely room, condemned not to confide her thoughts, to seek for sympathy even in her mother, — the poor girl in vain endeavoured to keep up to the tenor of her first enthusiasm, and reconcile herself to a step, which, however, she was heroine enough not to retract or to repent, even while she recoiled from its contemplation.

Lady Doltimore, amazed at what had passed, — at the flight of Maltravers, the success of Lumley, — unable to account for it, to extort explanation from Vargrave or from Evelyn, was distracted by the fear of some villanous deceit which she could not fathom. To escape herself she plunged yet more eagerly into the gay vortex. Vargrave, suspicious, and fearful of trusting to what she might say in her nervous and excited temper if removed from his watchful eye, deemed himself compelled to hover round her. His manner, his conduct, were most guarded; but Caroline herself, jealous, irritated, unsettled, evinced at times a right both to familiarity and anger, which drew upon her and himself the sly vigilance of slander. Meanwhile Lord Doltimore, though too cold and proud openly to notice what passed around him, seemed disturbed and anxious. His manner to Vargrave was distant; he shunned all *tête-à-têtes* with his wife. Little, however, of this did Lumley heed. A few weeks more, and all would be well and safe. Vargrave did not publish his engagement with Evelyn: he sought carefully to conceal it till the very day was near at hand; but it was whispered abroad; some laughed, some believed. Evelyn herself was seen nowhere. De Montaigne had, at first, been indignantly incredulous at the report that Maltravers had broken off a connection he had so desired from a motive so weak and unworthy as that of mere family pride. A letter from Maltravers, who confided to him and Vargrave alone the secret of his retreat, reluctantly convinced him that the wise are but pompous fools; he was angry and disgusted; and still more so when Valerie and Teresa (for female friends stand by us right or wrong) hinted at excuses, or surmised that other causes lurked behind the one alleged. But his

thoughts were much drawn from this subject by increasing anxiety for Cesarini, whose abode and fate still remained an alarming mystery.

It so happened that Lord Doltimore, who had always had a taste for the antique, and who was greatly displeased with his own family-seat because it was comfortable and modern, fell, from *ennui*, into a habit, fashionable enough in Paris, of buying curiosities and cabinets, — high-back chairs and oak-carvings; and with this habit returned the desire and the affection for Burleigh. Understanding from Lumley that Maltravers had probably left his native land forever, he imagined it extremely probable that the latter would now consent to the sale, and he begged Vargrave to forward a letter from him to that effect.

Vargrave made some excuse, for he felt that nothing could be more indelicate than such an application forwarded through his hands at such a time; and Doltimore, who had accidentally heard De Montaigne confess that he knew the address of Maltravers, quietly sent his letter to the Frenchman, and, without mentioning its contents, begged him to forward it. De Montaigne did so. Now it is very strange how slight men and slight incidents bear on the great events of life; but that simple letter was instrumental to a new revolution in the strange history of Maltravers.

CHAPTER II.

QUID frustra simulacra fugacia captas ? —

Quod petis est nusquam.¹ — OVID : *Met.* iii. 432.

To no clime dedicated to the indulgence of majestic griefs or to the soft melancholy of regret — not to thy glaciers, or thy dark-blue lakes, beautiful Switzerland, mother of many

¹ “ Why, in vain, do you catch at fleeting shadows ? That which you seek is nowhere.”

exiles; nor to thy fairer earth and gentler heaven, sweet Italy, — fled the agonized Maltravers. Once, in his wanderings, he had chanced to pass by a landscape so steeped in sullen and desolate gloom, that it had made a powerful and uneffaced impression upon his mind: it was amidst those swamps and morasses that formerly surrounded the castle of Gil de Retz, the ambitious Lord, the dreaded Necromancer, who perished at the stake, after a career of such power and splendour as seemed almost to justify the dark belief in his preternatural agencies.¹

Here, in a lonely and wretched inn, remote from other habitations, Maltravers fixed himself. In gentler griefs there is a sort of luxury in bodily discomfort; in his inexorable and unmitigated anguish, bodily discomfort was not felt. There is a kind of magnetism in extreme woe, by which the body itself seems laid asleep, and knows no distinction between the bed of Damians and the rose-couch of the Sybarite. He left his carriage and servants at a post-house some miles distant. He came to this dreary abode alone; and in that wintry season, and that most disconsolate scene, his gloomy soul found something congenial, something that did not mock him, in the frowns of the haggard and dismal Nature. Vain would it be to describe what he then felt, what he then endured. Suffice it that, through all, the diviner strength of man was not wholly crushed, and that daily, nightly, hourly, he prayed to the Great Comforter to assist him in wrestling against a guilty love. No man struggles so honestly, so ardently as he did, utterly in vain; for in us all, if we would but cherish it, there is a spirit that must rise at last — a crowned, if bleeding conqueror — over Fate and all the Demons!

One day after a prolonged silence from Vargrave, whose letters all breathed comfort and assurance in Evelyn's progressive recovery of spirit and hope, his messenger returned from the post-town with a letter in the hand of De Montaigne. It contained, in a blank envelope (De Montaigne's silence told

¹ See, for description of this scenery, and the fate of De Retz, the high-wrought and glowing romance by Mr. Ritchie called "The Magician."

him how much he had lost in the esteem of his friend), the communication of Lord Doltimore. It ran thus:—

MY DEAR SIR, — As I hear that your plans are likely to make you a long resident on the Continent, may I again inquire if you would be induced to dispose of Burleigh? I am willing to give more than its real value, and would raise a mortgage on my own property sufficient to pay off, at once, the whole purchase-money. Perhaps you may be the more induced to the sale from the circumstance of having an example in the head of your family, Colonel Maltravers, as I learn through Lord Vargrave, having resolved to dispose of Lisle Court. Waiting your answer,

I am, dear Sir, truly yours,

DOLTIMORE.

“Ay,” said Maltravers, bitterly, crushing the letter in his hand, “let our name be blotted out from the land, and our hearths pass to the stranger. How could I ever visit the place where I first saw *her*?”

He resolved at once, — he would write to England, and place the matter in the hands of agents. This was but a short-lived diversion to his thoughts, and their cloudy darkness soon gathered round him again.

What I am now about to relate may appear, to a hasty criticism, to savour of the Supernatural; but it is easily accounted for by ordinary agencies, and it is strictly to the letter of the truth.

In his sleep that night a dream appeared to Maltravers. He thought he was alone in the old library at Burleigh, and gazing on the portrait of his mother; as he so gazed, he fancied that a cold and awful tremor seized upon him, that he in vain endeavoured to withdraw his eyes from the canvas — his sight was chained there by an irresistible spell. Then it seemed to him that the portrait gradually changed, — the features the same, but the bloom vanished into a white and ghastly hue; the colours of the dress faded, their fashion grew more large and flowing, but heavy and rigid as if cut in stone, — the robes of the grave. But on the face there was a soft and melancholy smile, that took from its livid aspect the natural horror; the lips moved, and, it seemed as if without a sound, the released soul spoke to that which the earth yet owned.

"Return," it said, "to thy native land, and thine own home. Leave not the last relic of her who bore and yet watches over thee to stranger hands. Thy good Angel shall meet thee at thy hearth!"

The voice ceased. With a violent effort Maltravers broke the spell that had forbidden his utterance. He called aloud, and the dream vanished: he was broad awake, his hair erect, the cold dew on his brow. The pallet, rather than bed on which he lay, was opposite to the window, and the wintry moonlight streamed wan and spectral into the cheerless room. But between himself and the light there seemed to stand a shape, a shadow, that into which the portrait had changed in his dream,—that which had accosted and chilled his soul. He sprang forward, "My mother! even in the grave canst thou bless thy wretched son! Oh, leave me not—say that thou—" The delusion vanished, and Maltravers fell back insensible.

It was long in vain, when, in the healthful light of day, he revolved this memorable dream, that Maltravers sought to convince himself that dreams need no ministers from heaven or hell to bring the gliding falsehoods along the paths of sleep; that the effect of that dream itself, on his shattered nerves, his excited fancy, was the real and sole raiser of the spectre he had thought to behold on waking. Long was it before his judgment could gain the victory, and reason disown the empire of a turbulent imagination; and even when at length reluctantly convinced, the dream still haunted him, and he could not shake it from his breast. He longed anxiously for the next night; it came, but it brought neither dreams nor sleep, and the rain beat, and the winds howled, against the casement. Another night, and the moon was again bright; and he fell into a deep sleep; no vision disturbed or hallowed it. He woke ashamed of his own expectation. But the event, such as it was, by giving a new turn to his thoughts, had roused and relieved his spirit, and misery sat upon him with a lighter load. Perhaps, too, to that still haunting recollection was mainly owing a change in his former purpose. He would still sell the old Hall; but he

would first return, and remove that holy portrait, with pious hands; he would garner up and save all that had belonged to her whose death had been his birth. Ah, never had she known for what trials the infant had been reserved!

CHAPTER III.

THE weary hours steal on
And flaky darkness breaks. — *Richard III.*

ONCE more, suddenly and unlooked for, the lord of Burleigh appeared at the gates of his deserted hall! and again the old housekeeper and her satellites were thrown into dismay and consternation. Amidst blank and welcomeless faces, Maltravers passed into his study: and as soon as the logs burned and the bustle was over, and he was left alone, he took up the light and passed into the adjoining library. It was then about nine o'clock in the evening; the air of the room felt damp and chill, and the light but faintly struggled against the mournful gloom of the dark book-lined walls and sombre tapestry. He placed the candle on the table, and drawing aside the curtain that veiled the portrait, gazed with deep emotion, not unmixed with awe, upon the beautiful face whose eyes seemed fixed upon him with mournful sweetness. There is something mystical about those painted ghosts of ourselves, that survive our very dust! Who, gazing upon them long and wistfully, does not half fancy that they seem not insensible to his gaze, as if we looked our own life into them, and the eyes that followed us where we moved were animated by a stranger art than the mere trick of the limner's colours?

With folded arms, rapt and motionless, Maltravers contemplated the form that, by the upward rays of the flickering light, seemed to bend down towards the desolate son. How had he ever loved the memory of his mother! how often in

his childish years had he stolen away, and shed wild tears for the loss of that dearest of earthly ties, never to be compensated, never to be replaced! How had he respected, how sympathized with the very repugnance which his father had at first testified towards him, as the innocent cause of her untimely death! He had never seen her, — never felt her passionate kiss; and yet it seemed to him, as he gazed, as if he had known her for years. That strange kind of inner and spiritual memory which often recalls to us places and persons we have never seen before, and which Platonists would resolve to the unquenched and struggling consciousness of a former life, stirred within him, and seemed to whisper, “You were united in the old time.” “Yes!” he said, half aloud, “we will never part again. Blessed be the delusion of the dream that recalled to my heart the remembrance of thee, which, at least, I can cherish without a sin. ‘My good angel shall meet me at my hearth!’ so didst thou say in the solemn vision. Ah, does thy soul watch over me still? How long shall it be before the barrier is broken! how long before we meet, but not in dreams!”

The door opened, the housekeeper looked in. “I beg pardon, sir; but I thought your honour would excuse the liberty, though I know it is very bold to —”

“What is the matter? What do you want?”

“Why, sir, poor Mrs. Elton is dying, — they say she cannot get over the night; and as the carriage drove by the cottage window, the nurse told her that the squire was returned; and she has sent up the nurse to entreat to see your honour before she dies. I am sure I was most loth to disturb you, sir, with such a message; and says I, the squire has only just come off a journey —”

“Who is Mrs. Elton?”

“Don’t your honour remember the poor woman that was run over, and you were so good to, and brought into the house the day Miss Cameron —”

“I remember, — say I will be with her in a few minutes. About to die!” muttered Maltravers; “she is to be envied, — the prisoner is let loose, the bark leaves the desert isle!”

He took his hat and walked across the park, dimly lighted by the stars, to the cottage of the sufferer. He reached her bedside, and took her hand kindly. She seemed to rally at the sight of him; the nurse was dismissed, they were left alone.

Before morning, the spirit had left that humble clay; and the mists of dawn were heavy on the grass as Maltravers returned home. There were then on his countenance the traces of recent and strong emotion, and his step was elastic, and his cheek flushed. Hope once more broke within him, but mingled with doubt, and faintly combated by reason. In another hour Maltravers was on his way to Brook-Green. Impatient, restless, fevered, he urged on the horses, he sowed the road with gold; and at length the wheels stopped before the door of the village inn. He descended, asked the way to the curate's house; and crossing the burial-ground, and passing under the shadow of the old yew-tree, entered Aubrey's garden. The curate was at home, and the conference that ensued was of deep and breathless interest to the visitor.

It is now time to place before the reader, in due order and connection, the incidents of that story, the knowledge of which, at that period, broke in detached and fragmentary portions on Maltravers.

CHAPTER IV.

I CANNA chuse, but ever will
Be loving to thy father still,
Whaireir he gae, whaireir he ryde,
My luvè with him maun still abyde;
In weil or wae, whaireir he gae,
Mine heart can neir depart him frae.

Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament.

It may be remembered that in the earlier part of this continuation of the history of Maltravers it was stated that Aubrey had in early life met with the common lot of a disap-

pointed affection. Eleanor Westbrook, a young woman of his own humble rank, had won, and seemed to return, his love; but of that love she was not worthy. Vain, volatile, and ambitious, she forsook the poor student for a more brilliant marriage. She accepted the hand of a merchant, who was caught by her beauty, and who had the reputation of great wealth. They settled in London, and Aubrey lost all traces of her. She gave birth to an only daughter: and when that child had attained her fourteenth year, her husband suddenly, and seemingly without cause, put an end to his existence. The cause, however, was apparent before he was laid in his grave. He was involved far beyond his fortune, — he had died to escape beggary and a jail. A small annuity, not exceeding one hundred pounds, had been secured on the widow. On this income she retired with her child into the country; and chance, the vicinity of some distant connections, and the cheapness of the place, concurred to fix her residence in the outskirts of the town of C—. Characters that in youth have been most volatile and most worldly, often when bowed down and dejected by the adversity which they are not fitted to encounter, become the most morbidly devout; they ever require an excitement, and when earth denies, they seek it impatiently from heaven.

This was the case with Mrs. Westbrook; and this new turn of mind brought her naturally into contact with the principal saint of the neighbourhood, Mr. Richard Templeton. We have seen that that gentleman was not happy in his first marriage; death had not then annulled the bond. He was of an ardent and sensual temperament, and quietly, under the broad cloak of his doctrines, he indulged his constitutional tendencies. Perhaps in this respect he was not worse than nine men out of ten. But then he professed to be better than nine hundred thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a million! To a fault of temperament was added the craft of hypocrisy, and the vulgar error became a dangerous vice. Upon Mary Westbrook, the widow's daughter, he gazed with eyes that were far from being the eyes of the spirit. Even at the age of fourteen she charmed him; but when, after watch-

ing her ripening beauty expand, three years were added to that age, Mr. Templeton was most deeply in love. Mary was indeed lovely, — her disposition naturally good and gentle, but her education worse than neglected. To the frivolities and meannesses of a second-rate fashion, inculcated into her till her father's death, had now succeeded the quackeries, the slavish subservience, the intolerant bigotries, of a transcendental superstition. In a change so abrupt and violent, the whole character of the poor girl was shaken; her principles unsettled, vague, and unformed, and naturally of mediocre and even feeble intellect, she clung to the first plank held out to her in "that wide sea of wax" in which "she halted." Early taught to place the most implicit faith in the dictates of Mr. Templeton, fastening her belief round him as the vine winds its tendrils round the oak, yielding to his ascendancy, and pleased with his fostering and almost caressing manner, no confessor in Papal Italy ever was more dangerous to village virtue than Richard Templeton (who deemed himself the archetype of the only pure Protestantism) to the morals and heart of Mary Westbrook.

Mrs. Westbrook, whose constitution had been prematurely broken by long participation in the excesses of London dissipation and by the reverse of fortune which still preyed upon a spirit it had rather soured than humbled, died when Mary was eighteen. Templeton became the sole friend, comforter, and supporter of the daughter.

In an evil hour (let us trust not from premeditated villany), — an hour when the heart of one was softened by grief and gratitude, and the conscience of the other laid asleep by passion, the virtue of Mary Westbrook was betrayed. Her sorrow and remorse, his own fears of detection and awakened self-reproach, occasioned Templeton the most anxious and poignant regret. There had been a young woman in Mrs. Westbrook's service, who had left it a short time before the widow died, in consequence of her marriage. Her husband ill-used her; and glad to escape from him and prove her gratitude to her employer's daughter, of whom she had been extremely fond, she had returned to Miss Westbrook after the

funeral of her mother. The name of this woman was Sarah Miles. Templeton saw that Sarah more than suspected his connection with Mary; it was necessary to make a confidant, — he selected her. Miss Westbrook was removed to a distant part of the country, and Templeton visited her cautiously and rarely. Four months afterwards, Mrs. Templeton died, and the husband was free to repair his wrong. Oh, how he then repented of what had passed! but four months' delay, and all this sin and sorrow might have been saved! He was now racked with perplexity and doubt: his unfortunate victim was advanced in her pregnancy. It was necessary, if he wished his child to be legitimate — still more if he wished to preserve the honour of its mother — that he should not hesitate long in the reparation to which duty and conscience urged him. But on the other hand, he, the saint, the oracle, the immaculate example for all forms, proprieties, and decorums, to scandalize the world by so rapid and premature a hymen —

“ Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in his galled eyes,
To marry.”

No! he could not brave the sneer of the gossips, the triumph of his foes, the dejection of his disciples, by so rank and rash a folly. But still Mary pined so, he feared for her health — for his own unborn offspring. There was a middle path, — a compromise between duty and the world; he grasped at it as most men similarly situated would have done, — they were married, but privately, and under feigned names: the secret was kept close. Sarah Miles was the only witness acquainted with the real condition and names of the parties.

Reconciled to herself, the bride recovered health and spirits, Templeton formed the most sanguine hopes. He resolved, as soon as the confinement was over, to go abroad; Mary should follow; in a foreign land they should be publicly married; they would remain some years on the Continent; when he returned, his child's age could be put back a year. Oh, nothing could be more clear and easy!

Death shivered into atoms all the plans of Mr. Templeton.

Mary suffered most severely in childbirth, and died a few weeks afterwards. Templeton at first was inconsolable, but worldly thoughts were great comforters. He had done all that conscience could do to atone a sin, and he was freed from a most embarrassing dilemma, and from a temporary banishment utterly uncongenial and unpalatable to his habits and ideas. But now he had a child, — a legitimate child, successor to his name, his wealth; a first-born child, — the only one ever sprung from him, the prop and hope of advancing years! On this child he doted with all that paternal passion which the hardest and coldest men often feel the most for their own flesh and blood — for fatherly love is sometimes but a transfer of self-love from one fund to another.

Yet this child — this darling that he longed to show to the whole world — it was absolutely necessary, for the present, that he should conceal and disown. It had happened that Sarah's husband died of his own excesses a few weeks before the birth of Templeton's child, she having herself just recovered from her confinement; Sarah was therefore free forever from her husband's vigilance and control. To her care the destined heiress was committed, and her own child put out to nurse. And this was the woman and this the child who had excited so much benevolent curiosity in the breasts of the worthy clergyman and the three old maids of C—. ¹ Alarmed at Sarah's account of the scrutiny of the parson, and at his own rencontre with that hawk-eyed pastor, Templeton lost no time in changing the abode of the nurse; and to her new residence had the banker bent his way, with rod and angle, on that evening which witnessed his adventure with Luke Darvil. ² When Mr. Templeton first met Alice, his own child was only about thirteen or fourteen months old, — but little older than Alice's. If the beauty of Mrs. Leslie's *protégée* first excited his coarser nature, her maternal tenderness, her anxious care for her little one, struck a congenial chord in the father's heart. It connected him with her by a mute and unceasing sympathy. Templeton had felt so deeply

¹ See "Ernest Maltravers," book iv., p. 164.

² "Ernest Maltravers," book iv., p. 181.

the alarm and pain of illicit love, he had been (as he profanely believed) saved from the brink of public shame by so signal an interference of grace, that he resolved no more to hazard his good name and his peace of mind upon such perilous rocks. The dearest desire at his heart was to have his daughter under his roof, — to fondle, to play with her, to watch her growth, to win her affection. This, at present, seemed impossible. But if he were to marry, — marry a widow, to whom he might confide all, or a portion, of the truth; if that child could be passed off as hers — ah, that was the best plan! And Templeton wanted a wife! Years were creeping on him, and the day would come when a wife would be useful as a nurse. But Alice was supposed to be a widow; and Alice was so meek, so docile, so motherly. If she could be induced to remove from C——, either part with her own child or call it her niece, — and adopt his. Such, from time to time, were Templeton's thoughts, as he visited Alice, and found, with every visit, fresh evidence of her tender and beautiful disposition; such the objects which, in the First Part of this work, we intimated were different from those of mere admiration for her beauty.¹ But again, worldly doubts and fears — the dislike of so unsuitable an alliance, the worse than lowness of Alice's origin, the dread of discovery for her early error — held him back, wavering and irresolute. To say truth, too, her innocence and purity of thought kept him at a certain distance. He was acute enough to see that he—even he, the great Richard Templeton—might be refused by the faithful Alice.

At last Darvil was dead; he breathed more freely, he revolved more seriously his projects; and at this time, Sarah, wooed by her first lover, wished to marry again; his secret would pass from her breast to her second husband's, and thence how far would it travel? Added to this, Sarah's con-

¹ "Our banker always seemed more struck by Alice's moral feelings than even by her physical beauty. Her love for her child, for instance, impressed him powerfully," etc. "His feelings altogether for Alice, the designs he entertained towards her, were of a very complicated nature, and it will be long, perhaps, before the reader can thoroughly comprehend them." — See "Ernest Maltravers," book iv., p. 178.

science grew uneasy; the brand ought to be effaced from the memory of the dead mother, the legitimacy of the child proclaimed; she became importunate, she wearied and she alarmed the pious man. He therefore resolved to rid himself of the only witness to his marriage whose testimony he had cause to fear, — of the presence of the only one acquainted with his sin and the real name of the husband of Mary Westbrook. He consented to Sarah's marriage with William Elton, and offered a liberal dowry on the condition that she should yield to the wish of Elton himself, an adventurous young man, who desired to try his fortunes in the New World. His daughter he must remove elsewhere.

While this was going on, Alice's child, long delicate and drooping, became seriously ill. Symptoms of decline appeared; the physician recommended a milder air, and Devonshire was suggested. Nothing could equal the generous, the fatherly kindness which Templeton evinced on this most painful occasion. He insisted on providing Alice with the means to undertake the journey with ease and comfort; and poor Alice, with a heart heavy with gratitude and sorrow, consented for her child's sake to all he offered.

Now the banker began to perceive that all his hopes and wishes were in good train. He foresaw that the child of Alice was doomed! — that was one obstacle out of the way. Alice herself was to be removed from the sphere of her humble calling. In a distant county she might appear of better station, and under another name. Conformably to these views, he suggested to her that, in proportion to the seeming wealth and respectability of patients, did doctors attend to their complaints. He proposed that Alice should depart privately to a town many miles off; that there he would provide for her a carriage, and engage a servant; that he would do this for her as for a relation, and that she should take that relation's name. To this, Alice rapt in her child, and submissive to all that might be for the child's benefit, passively consented. It was arranged then as proposed, and under the name of Cameron, which, as at once a common yet a well-sounding name, occurred to his invention, Alice departed

with her sick charge and a female attendant (who knew nothing of her previous calling or story), on the road to Devonshire. Templeton himself resolved to follow her thither in a few days; and it was fixed that they should meet at Exeter.

It was on this melancholy journey that occurred that memorable day when Alice once more beheld Maltravers; and, as she believed, uttering the vows of love to another.¹ The indisposition of her child had delayed her some hours at the inn: the poor sufferer had fallen asleep; and Alice had stolen from its couch for a little while, when her eyes rested on the father. Oh, how then she longed, she burned to tell him of the new sanctity, that, by a human life, had been added to their early love! And when, crushed and sick at heart, she turned away, and believed herself forgotten and replaced, it was the pride of the mother rather than of the mistress that supported her. She, meek creature, felt not the injury to herself; but *his* child, — the sufferer, perhaps the dying one, — *there, there* was the wrong! No! she would not hazard the chance of a cold — great Heaven! perchance an *incredulous* — look upon the hushed, pale face above. But little time was left for thought, for explanation, for discovery. She saw him — unconscious of the ties so near, and thus lost — depart as a stranger from the spot; and henceforth was gone the sweet hope of living for the future. Nothing was left her but the pledge of that which had been. Mournful, despondent, half broken-hearted, she resumed her journey. At Exeter she was joined, as agreed, by Mr. Templeton; and with him came a fair, a blooming, and healthful girl to contrast her own drooping charge. Though but a few weeks older, you would have supposed the little stranger by a year the senior of Alice's child: the one was so well grown, so advanced; the other so backward, so nipped in the sickly bud.

"You can repay me for all, for more than I have done; more than I ever can do for you and yours," said Templeton, "by taking this young stranger also under your care. It is the child of one dear, most dear to me; an orphan; I know

¹ See "Ernest Maltravers," book v., p. 221.

not with whom else to place it. Let it for the present be supposed your own, — the elder child.”

Alice could refuse nothing to her benefactor; but her heart did not open at first to the beautiful girl, whose sparkling eyes and rosy cheeks mocked the languid looks and faded hues of her own darling. But the sufferer seemed to hail a playmate; it smiled, it put forth its poor, thin hands; it uttered its inarticulate cry of pleasure, and Alice burst into tears, and clasped them *both* to her heart.

Mr. Templeton took care not to rest under the same roof with her he now seriously intended to make his wife; but he followed Alice to the seaside, and visited her daily. Her infant rallied; it was tenacious of the upper air; it clung to life so fondly; poor child, it could not foresee what a bitter thing to some of us life is! And now it was that Templeton, learning from Alice her adventure with her absent lover, learning that all hope in that quarter was gone, seized the occasion, and pressed his suit. Alice at the hour was overflowing with gratitude; in her child's reviving looks she read all her obligations to her benefactor. But still, at the word *love*, at the name of *marriage*, her heart recoiled; and the lost, the faithless, came back to his fatal throne. In choked and broken accents, she startled the banker with the refusal — the faltering, tearful, but resolute refusal — of his suit.

But Templeton brought new engines to work: he wooed her through her child; he painted all the brilliant prospects that would open to the infant by her marriage with him. He would cherish, rear, provide for it as his own. This shook her resolves; but this did not prevail. He had recourse to a more generous appeal: he told her so much of his history with Mary Westbrook as commenced with his hasty and indecorous marriage, — attributing the haste to love! made her comprehend his scruples in owning the child of a union the world would be certain to ridicule or condemn; he expatiated on the inestimable blessings she could afford him, by delivering him from all embarrassment, and restoring his daughter, though under a borrowed name, to her father's roof. At this

Alice mused; at this she seemed irresolute. She had long seen how inexpressibly dear to Templeton was the child confided to her care; how he grew pale if the slightest ailment reached her; how he chafed at the very wind if it visited her cheek too roughly; and she now said to him simply, —

“Is your child, in truth, your dearest object in life? Is it with her, and her alone, that your dearest hopes are connected?”

“It is, — it is indeed!” said the banker, honestly surprised out of his gallantry; “at least,” he added, recovering his self-possession, “as much so as is compatible with my affection for you.”

“And only if I marry you, and adopt her as my own, do you think that your secret may be safely kept, and all your wishes with respect to her be fulfilled?”

“Only so.”

“And for that reason, chiefly, nay entirely, you condescend to forget what I have been, and seek my hand? Well, if that were all, I owe you too much; my poor babe tells me too loudly what I owe you to draw back from anything that can give you so blessed an enjoyment. Ah, one’s child! one’s own child, under one’s own roof, it *is* such a blessing! But then, if I marry you, it can be only to secure to you that object; to be as a mother to your child; but wife only in name to you! I am not so lost as to despise myself. I know now, though I knew it not at first, that I have been guilty; nothing can excuse that guilt but fidelity to *him*! Oh, yes! I never, never can be unfaithful to my babe’s father! As for all else, dispose of me as you will.” And Alice, who from very innocence had uttered all this without a blush, now clasped her hands passionately, and left Templeton speechless with mortification and surprise.

When he recovered himself, he affected not to understand her; but Alice was not satisfied, and all further conversation ceased. He began slowly, and at last, and after repeated conferences and urgings, to comprehend how strange and stubborn in some points was the humble creature whom his proposals so highly honoured. Though his daughter was

indeed his first object in life; though for her he was willing to make a *mésalliance*, the extent of which it would be incumbent on him studiously to conceal, — yet still, the beauty of Alice awoke an earthlier sentiment that he was not disposed to conquer. He was quite willing to make promises, and talk generously; but when it came to an oath, — a solemn, a binding oath — and this Alice rigidly exacted, — he was startled, and drew back. Though hypocritical, he was, as we have before said, a most sincere believer. He might creep through a promise with unbruised conscience; but he was not one who could have dared to violate an oath, and lay the load of perjury on his soul. Perhaps, after all, the union never would have taken place, but Templeton fell ill; that soft and relaxing air did not agree with him; a low but dangerous fever seized him, and the worldly man trembled at the aspect of Death. It was in this illness that Alice nursed him with a daughter's vigilance and care; and when at length he recovered, impressed with her zeal and kindness, softened by illness, afraid of the approach of solitary age, — and feeling more than ever his duties to his motherless child, he threw himself at Alice's feet, and solemnly vowed all that she required.

It was during this residence in Devonshire, and especially during his illness, that Templeton made and cultivated the acquaintance of Mr. Aubrey. The good clergyman prayed with him by his sick-bed; and when Templeton's danger was at its height, he sought to relieve his conscience by a confession of his wrongs to Mary Westbrook. The name startled Aubrey; and when he learned that the lovely child who had so often sat on his knee, and smiled in his face, was the granddaughter of his first and only love, he had a new interest in her welfare, a new reason to urge Templeton to reparation, a new motive to desire to procure for the infant years of Eleanor's grandchild the gentle care of the young mother, whose own bereavement he sorrowfully foretold. Perhaps the advice and exhortations of Aubrey went far towards assisting the conscience of Mr. Templeton, and reconciling him to the sacrifice he made to his affection for his daughter.

Be that as it may, he married Alice, and Aubrey solemnized and blessed the chill and barren union.

But now came a new and inexpressible affliction; the child of Alice had rallied but for a time. The dread disease had but dallied with its prey; it came on with rapid and sudden force; and within a month from the day that saw Alice the bride of Templeton, the last hope was gone, and the mother was bereft and childless!

The blow that stunned Alice was not, after the first natural shock of sympathy, an unwelcome event to the banker. Now *his* child would be Alice's sole care; now there could be no gossip, no suspicion why, in life and after death, he should prefer one child, supposed not his own, to the other.

He hastened to remove Alice from the scene of her affliction. He dismissed the solitary attendant who had accompanied her on her journey; he bore his wife to London, and finally settled, as we have seen, at a villa in its vicinity. And there, more and more, day by day, centred his love upon the supposed daughter of Mrs. Templeton, his darling and his heiress, the beautiful Evelyn Cameron.

For the first year or two, Templeton evinced some alarming disposition to escape from the oath he had imposed upon himself; but on the slightest hint there was a sternness in the wife, in all else so respectful, so submissive, that repressed and awed him. She even threatened — and at one time was with difficulty prevented carrying the threat into effect — to leave his roof forever, if there were the slightest question of the sanctity of his vow. Templeton trembled; such a separation would excite gossip, curiosity, scandal, a noise in the world, public talk, possible discovery. Besides, Alice was necessary to Evelyn, necessary to his own comfort; something to scold in health, something to rely upon in illness. Gradually then, but sullenly, he reconciled himself to his lot; and as years and infirmities grew upon him, he was contented at least to have secured a faithful friend and an anxious nurse. Still a marriage of this sort was not blessed: Templeton's vanity was wounded; his temper, always harsh, was soured; he avenged his affront by a thousand petty tyr

annies; and, without a murmur, Alice perhaps in those years of rank and opulence suffered more than in all her wanderings, with love at her heart and her infant in her arms.

Evelyn was to be the heiress to the wealth of the banker. But the *title* of the new peer! — if he could unite wealth and title, and set the coronet on that young brow! This had led him to seek the alliance with Lumley. And on his death-bed, it was not the secret of Alice, but that of Mary Westbrook and his daughter, which he had revealed to his dismayed and astonished nephew, in excuse for the apparently unjust alienation of his property, and as the cause of the alliance he had sought.

While her husband, if husband he might be called, lived, Alice had seemed to bury in her bosom her regret — deep, mighty, passionate, as it was — for her lost child, the child of the unforgotten lover, to whom, through such trials, and amid such new ties, she had been faithful from first to last. But when once more free, her heart flew back to the far and lowly grave. Hence her yearly visits to Brook-Green; hence her purchase of the cottage, hallowed by memories of the dead. There, on that lawn, had she borne forth the fragile form, to breathe the soft noontide air; there, in that chamber, had she watched and hoped, and prayed and despaired; there, in that quiet burial-ground, rested the beloved dust! But Alice, even in her holiest feelings, was not selfish: she forbore to gratify the first wish of her heart till Evelyn's education was sufficiently advanced to enable her to quit the neighbourhood; and then, to the delight of Aubrey (who saw in Evelyn a fairer, and nobler, and purer Eleanor), she came to the solitary spot, which, in all the earth, was the *least* solitary to her!

And now the image of the lover of her youth — which during her marriage she had *sought*, at least, to banish — returned to her, and at times inspired her with the only hopes that the grave had not yet transferred to heaven! In relating her tale to Aubrey or in conversing with Mrs. Leslie, whose friendship she still maintained, she found that both concurred in thinking that this obscure and wandering Butler, so skilled

in an art in which eminence in man is generally professional, must be of mediocere or perhaps humble station. Ah! now that she was free and rich, if she were to meet him again, and his love was not all gone, and he would believe in *her* strange and constant truth; now, *his* infidelity could be forgiven, — forgotten in the benefits it might be hers to bestow! And how, poor Alice, in that remote village, was chance to throw him in your way? She knew not: but something often whispered to her, “Again you shall meet those eyes; again you shall hear that voice; and you shall tell him, weeping on his breast, how you loved his child!” And would he not have forgotten her; would he not have formed new ties? — could he read the loveliness of unchangeable affection in that pale and pensive face! Alas, when we love intensely, it is difficult to make us fancy that there is no love in return!

The reader is acquainted with the adventures of Mrs. Elton, the sole confidant of the secret union of Templeton and Evelyn’s mother. By a singular fatality, it was the selfish and characteristic recklessness of Vargrave that had, in fixing her home at Burleigh, ministered to the revelation of his own villanous deceit. On returning to England she had inquired for Mr. Templeton; she had learned that he had married again, had been raised to the peerage under the title of Lord Vargrave, and was gathered to his fathers. She had no claim on his widow or his family. But the unfortunate child who should have inherited his property, she could only suppose her dead.

When she first saw Evelyn, she was startled by her likeness to her unfortunate mother. But the unfamiliar name of Cameron, the intelligence received from Maltravers that Evelyn’s mother still lived, dispelled her suspicions; and though at times the resemblance haunted her, she doubted and inquired no more. In fact, her own infirmities grew upon her, and pain usurped her thoughts.

Now it so happened that the news of the engagement of Maltravers to Miss Cameron became known to the county but a little time before he arrived, — for news travels slow from the Continent to our provinces, — and, of course, excited all

the comment of the villagers. Her nurse repeated the tale to Mrs. Elton, who instantly remembered the name, and recalled the resemblance of Miss Cameron to the unfortunate Mary Westbrook.

"And," said the gossiping nurse, "she was engaged, they say, to a great lord, and gave him up for the squire, — a great lord in the court, who had been staying at Parson Merton's, Lord Vargrave!"

"Lord Vargrave!" exclaimed Mrs. Elton, remembering the title to which Mr. Templeton had been raised.

"Yes; they do say as how the late lord left Miss Cameron all his money — such a heap of it — though she was not his child, over the head of his nevy, the present lord, on the understanding like that they were to be married when she came of age. But she would not take to him after she had seen the squire. And, to be sure, the squire is the finest-looking gentleman in the county."

"Stop! stop!" said Mrs. Elton, feebly; "the late lord left all his fortune to Miss Cameron, — not his child! I guess the riddle! I understand it all! my foster-child!" she murmured, turning away; "how could I have mistaken that likeness?"

The agitation of the discovery she supposed she had made, her joy at the thought that the child she had loved as her own was alive and possessed of its rights, expedited the progress of Mrs. Elton's disease; and Maltravers arrived just in time to learn her confession (which she naturally wished to make to one who was at once her benefactor, and supposed to be the destined husband of her foster-child), and to be agitated with hope, with joy, at her solemn conviction of the truth of her surmises. If Evelyn were not his daughter — even if not to be his bride — what a weight from his soul! He hastened to Brook-Green; and dreading to rush at once to the presence of Alice, he recalled Aubrey to his recollection. In the interview he sought, all, or at least much, was cleared up. He saw at once the premeditated and well-planned villany of Vargrave. And Alice, her tale — her sufferings — her indomitable love! — how should he meet *her*?

CHAPTER V.

YET once more, O ye laurels ! and once more,
Ye myrtles ! — LYCIDAS.

WHILE Maltravers was yet agitated and excited by the disclosure of the curate, to whom, as a matter of course, he had divulged his own identity with the mysterious Butler, Aubrey, turning his eyes to the casement, saw the form of Lady Vargrave slowly approaching towards the house.

"Will you withdraw to the inner room?" said he; "she is coming; you are not yet prepared to meet her! — nay, would it be well?"

"Yes, yes; I am prepared. We must be alone. I will await her here."

"But —"

"Nay, I implore you!"

The curate, without another word, retired into the inner apartment, and Maltravers sinking in a chair breathlessly awaited the entrance of Lady Vargrave. He soon heard the light step without; the door, which opened at once on the old-fashioned parlour, was gently unclosed, and Lady Vargrave was in the room! In the position he had taken, only the outline of Ernest's form was seen by Alice, and the daylight came dim through the cottage casement; and seeing some one seated in the curate's accustomed chair, she could but believe that it was Aubrey himself.

"Do not let me interrupt you," said that sweet, low voice, whose music had been dumb for so many years to Maltravers, "but I have a letter from France, from a stranger. It alarms me so; it is about Evelyn;" and, as if to imply that she meditated a longer visit than ordinary, Lady Vargrave removed her bonnet, and placed it on the table. Surprised that the curate had not answered, had not come forward to welcome her, she then approached; Maltravers rose, and they stood

before each other face to face. And how lovely still was Alice! lovelier he thought even than of old! And those eyes, so divinely blue, so dovelike and soft; yet with some spiritual and unfathomable mystery in their clear depth, were once more fixed upon him. Alice seemed turned to stone; she moved not, she spoke not, she scarcely breathed; she gazed spellbound, as if her senses — as if life itself — had deserted her.

"Alice!" murmured Maltravers, — "Alice, we meet at last!"

His voice restored memory, consciousness, youth, at once to her! She uttered a loud cry of unspeakable joy, of rapture! She sprang forward — reserve, fear, time, change, all forgotten; she threw herself into his arms, she clasped him to her heart again and again! — the faithful dog that has found its master expresses not his transport more uncontrollably, more wildly. It was something fearful — the excess of her ecstasy! She kissed his hands, his clothes; she laughed, she wept; and at last, as words came, she laid her head on his breast, and said passionately, "I have been true to thee! I have been true to thee! — or this hour would have killed me!" Then, as if alarmed by his silence, she looked up into his face, and as his burning tears fell upon her cheek, she said again and with more hurried vehemence, "*I have* been faithful, — do you not believe me?"

"I do, I do, noble, unequalled Alice! Why, why were you so long lost to me? Why now does your love so shame my own?"

At these words, Alice appeared to awaken from her first oblivion of all that had chanced since they met; she blushed deeply, and drew herself gently and bashfully from his embrace. "Ah," she said, in altered and humbled accents, "you have loved another! Perhaps you have no love left for me! Is it so; is it? No, no; those eyes — you love me — you love me still!"

And again she clung to him, as if it were heaven to believe all things, and death to doubt. Then, after a pause, she drew him gently with both her hands towards the light, and gazed

upon him fondly, proudly, as if to trace, line by line, and feature by feature, the countenance which had been to her sweet thoughts as the sunlight to the flowers. "Changed, changed," she muttered; "but still the same, — still beautiful, still divine!" She stopped. A sudden thought struck her: his garments were worn and soiled by travel, and that princely crest, fallen and dejected, no longer towered in proud defiance above the sons of men. "You are not rich," she exclaimed eagerly, — "say you are not rich! I am rich enough for both; it is all yours, — all yours; I did not betray you for it; there is no shame in it. Oh, we shall be so happy! Thou art come back to thy poor Alice! thou knowest how she loved thee!"

There was in Alice's manner, her wild joy, something so different from her ordinary self, that none who could have seen her — quiet, pensive, subdued — would have fancied her the same being. All that Society and its woes had taught were gone; and Nature once more claimed her fairest child. The very years seemed to have fallen from her brow, and she looked scarcely older than when she had stood with him beneath the moonlight by the violet banks far away. Suddenly, her colour faded; the smile passed from the dimpled lips; a sad and solemn aspect succeeded to that expression of passionate joy. "Come," she said, in a whisper, "come, follow;" and still clasping his hand, she drew him to the door. Silent and wonderingly he followed her across the lawn, through the moss-grown gate, and into the lonely burial-ground. She moved on with a noiseless and gliding step, — so pale, so hushed, so breathless, that even in the noonday you might have half fancied the fair shape was not owned by earth. She paused where the yew-tree cast its gloomy shadow; and the small and tombless mound, separated from the rest, was before them. She pointed to it, and falling on her knees beside it, murmured, "Hush, it sleeps below, — thy child!" She covered her face with both her hands, and her form shook convulsively.

Beside that form and before that grave knelt Maltravers. There vanished the last remnant of his stoic pride; and there — Evelyn herself forgotten — there did he pray to Heaven for

pardon to himself, and blessings on the heart he had betrayed. There solemnly did he vow, the remainder of his years, to guard from all future ill the faithful and childless mother.

CHAPTER VI.

WILL Fortune never come with both hands full,
But write her fair words still in foulest letters ?

Henry IV. Part ii.

I PASS over those explanations, that record of Alice's eventful history, which Maltravers learned from her own lips, to confirm and add to the narrative of the curate, the purport of which is already known to the reader.

It was many hours before Alice was sufficiently composed to remember the object for which she had sought the curate. But she had laid the letter which she had brought, and which explained all, on the table at the vicarage; and when Maltravers, having at last induced Alice, who seemed afraid to lose sight of him for an instant, to retire to her room, and seek some short repose, returned towards the vicarage, he met Aubrey in the garden. The old man had taken the friend's acknowledged license to read the letter evidently meant for his eye; and, alarmed and anxious, he now eagerly sought a consultation with Maltravers. The letter, written in English, as familiar to the writer as her own tongue, was from Madame de Ventadour. It had been evidently dictated by the kindest feelings. After apologizing briefly for her interference, she stated that Lord Vargrave's marriage with Miss Cameron was now a matter of public notoriety; that it would take place in a few days; that it was observed with suspicion that Miss Cameron appeared nowhere; that she seemed almost a prisoner in her room; that certain expressions which had dropped from Lady Doltimore had alarmed her greatly. According to

these expressions, it would seem that Lady Vargrave was not apprised of the approaching event; that, considering Miss Cameron's recent engagement to Mr. Maltravers suddenly (and, as Valerie thought, unaccountably) broken off on the arrival of Lord Vargrave; considering her extreme youth, her brilliant fortune; and, Madame de Ventadour delicately hinted, considering also Lord Vargrave's character for unscrupulous determination in the furtherance of any object on which he was bent, — considering all this, Madame de Ventadour had ventured to address Miss Cameron's mother, and to guard her against the possibility of design or deceit. Her best apology for her intrusion must be her deep interest in Miss Cameron, and her long friendship for one to whom Miss Cameron had been so lately betrothed. If Lady Vargrave were aware of the new engagement, and had sanctioned it, of course her intrusion was unseasonable and superfluous; but if ascribed to its real motive, would not be the less forgiven.

It was easy for Maltravers to see in this letter how generous and zealous had been that friendship for himself which could have induced the woman of the world to undertake so officious a task. But of this he thought not, as he hurried over the lines, and shuddered at Evelyn's urgent danger.

"This intelligence," said Aubrey, "must be, indeed, a surprise to Lady Vargrave. For we have not heard a word from Evelyn or Lord Vargrave to announce such a marriage; and she (and myself till this day) believed that the engagement between Evelyn and Mr. —, I mean," said Aubrey with confusion, — "I mean yourself, was still in force. Lord Vargrave's villany is apparent; we must act immediately. What is to be done?"

"I will return to Paris to-morrow; I will defeat his machination, expose his falsehood!"

"You may need a proxy for Lady Vargrave, an authority for Evelyn; one whom Lord Vargrave knows to possess the secret of her birth, her rights: I will go with you. We must speak to Lady Vargrave."

Maltravers turned sharply round. "And Alice knows not who I am; that I — I am, or was, a few weeks ago, the suitor

of another; and that other the child she has reared as her own! Unhappy Alice! in the very hour of her joy at my return, is she to writhe beneath this new affliction?"

"Shall I break it to her?" said Aubrey, pityingly.

"No, no; these lips must inflict the last wrong!"

Maltravers walked away, and the curate saw him no more till night.

In the interval, and late in the evening, Maltravers rejoined Alice.

The fire burned clear on the hearth, the curtains were drawn, the pleasant but simple drawing-room of the cottage smiled its welcome as Maltravers entered, and Alice sprang up to greet him! It was as if the old days of the music-lesson and the meerschaum had come back.

"This is yours," said Alice, tenderly, as he looked round the apartment. "Now—now I know what a blessed thing riches are! Ah, you are looking on that picture; it is of her who supplied your daughter's place,—she is so beautiful, so good, you will love her as a daughter. Oh, that letter—that letter—I forgot it till now—it is at the vicarage—I must go there immediately, and you will come too,—you will advise us."

"Alice, I have read the letter,—I know all. Alice, sit down and hear me,—it is you who have to learn from me. In our young days I was accustomed to tell you stories in winter nights like these,—stories of love like our own, of sorrows which, at that time, we only knew by hearsay. I have one now for your ear, truer and sadder than they were. Two children, for they were then little more—children in ignorance of the world, children in freshness of heart, children almost in years—were thrown together by strange vicissitudes, more than eighteen years ago. They were of different sexes,—they loved and they erred. But the error was solely with the boy; for what was innocence in her was but passion in him. He loved her dearly; but at that age her qualities were half developed. He knew her beautiful, simple, tender; but he knew not all the virtue, the faith, and the nobleness that Heaven had planted in her soul. They parted,—they

knew not each other's fate. He sought her anxiously, but in vain; and sorrow and remorse long consumed him, and her memory threw a shadow over his existence. But again — for his love had not the exalted holiness of hers (*she* was true!) — he sought to renew in others the charm he had lost with her. In vain, — long, long in vain. Alice, you know to whom the tale refers. Nay, listen yet. I have heard from the old man yonder that you were witness to a scene many years ago which deceived you into the belief that you beheld a rival. It was not so: that lady yet lives, — then, as now, a friend to me; nothing more. I grant that, at one time, my fancy allured me to her, but my heart was still true to thee.”

“Bless you for those words!” murmured Alice; and she crept more closely to him.

He went on. “Circumstances, which at some calmer occasion you shall hear, again nearly connected my fate by marriage to another. I had then seen you at a distance, unseen by you, — seen you apparently surrounded by respectability and opulence; and I blessed Heaven that your lot, at least, was not that of penury and want.” (Here Maltravers related where he had caught that brief glimpse of Alice,¹ — how he had sought for her again and again in vain.) “From that hour,” he continued, “seeing you in circumstances of which I could not have dared to dream, I felt more reconciled to the past; yet, when on the verge of marriage with another — beautiful, gifted, generous as she was — a thought, a memory half acknowledged, dimly traced, chained back my sentiments; and admiration, esteem, and gratitude were not love! Death — a death melancholy and tragic — forbade this union; and I went forth in the world, a pilgrim and a wanderer. Years rolled away, and I thought I had conquered the desire for love, — a desire that had haunted me since I lost thee. But, suddenly and recently, a being, beautiful as yourself — sweet, guileless, and young as you were when we met — woke in me a new and a strange sentiment. I will not conceal it from you: Alice, at last I loved another! Yet, singular as it may seem to you, it was a certain resemblance to yourself, not

¹ See “Ernest Maltravers,” book v., p. 228.

in feature, but in the tones of the voice, the nameless grace of gesture and manner, the very music of your once happy laugh, — those traits of resemblance which I can now account for, and which children catch not from their parents only, but from those they most see, and, loving most, most imitate in their tender years, — all these, I say, made perhaps a chief attraction, that drew me towards — Alice, are you prepared for it? — drew me towards Evelyn Cameron. Know me in my real character, by my true name: I am that Maltravers to whom the hand of Evelyn was a few weeks ago betrothed!”

He paused, and ventured to look up at Alice; she was exceedingly pale, and her hands were tightly clasped together, but she neither wept nor spoke. The worst was over; he continued more rapidly, and with less constrained an effort: “By the art, the duplicity, the falsehood of Lord Vargrave, I was taught in a sudden hour to believe that Evelyn was our daughter, that you recoiled from the prospect of beholding once more the author of so many miseries. I need not tell you, Alice, of the horror that succeeded to love. I pass over the tortures I endured. By a train of incidents to be related to you hereafter, I was led to suspect the truth of Vargrave’s tale. I came hither; I have learned all from Aubrey. I regret no more the falsehood that so racked me for the time; I regret no more the rupture of my bond with Evelyn; I regret nothing that brings me at last free and unshackled to thy feet, and acquaints me with thy sublime faith and ineffable love. Here then — here beneath your own roof — here he, at once your earliest friend and foe, kneels to you for pardon and for hope! He woos you as his wife, his companion to the grave! Forget all his errors, and be to him, under a holier name, all that you were to him of old!”

“And you are then Evelyn’s suitor, — you are he whom she loves? I see it all — all!” Alice rose, and, before he was even aware of her purpose, or conscious of what she felt, she had vanished from the room.

Long, and with the bitterest feelings, he awaited her return; she came not. At last he wrote a hurried note, imploring her to join him again, to relieve his suspense; to

believe his sincerity; to accept his vows. He sent it to her own room, to which she had hastened to bury her emotions. In a few minutes there came to him this answer, written in pencil, blotted with tears.

"I thank you, I understand your heart; but forgive me — I cannot see you yet. She is so beautiful and good, she is worthy of you. I shall soon be reconciled. God bless you, — bless you both!"

The door of the vicarage was opened abruptly, and Maltravers entered with a hasty but heavy tread.

"Go to her, go to that angel; go, I beseech you! Tell her that she wrongs me, if she thinks I can ever wed another, ever have an object in life, but to atone to, to merit her. Go, plead for me."

Aubrey, who soon gathered from Maltravers what had passed, departed to the cottage. It was near midnight before he returned. Maltravers met him in the churchyard, beside the yew-tree. "Well, well, what message do you bring?"

"She wishes that we should both set off for Paris to-morrow. Not a day is to be lost, — we must save Evelyn from this snare."

"Evelyn! Yes, Evelyn shall be saved; but the rest — the rest — why do you turn away?"

"You are not the poor artist, the wandering adventurer; you are the high-born, the wealthy, the renowned Maltravers: Alice has nothing to confer on you. You have won the love of Evelyn, — Alice cannot doom the child confided to her care to hopeless affection; you love Evelyn, — Alice cannot compare herself to the young and educated and beautiful creature, whose love is a priceless treasure. Alice prays you not to grieve for her; she will soon be content and happy in your happiness.' This is the message."

"And what said you, — did you not tell her such words would break my heart?"

"No matter what I said; I mistrust myself when I advise her. Her feelings are truer than all our wisdom!"

Maltravers made no answer, and the curate saw him gliding rapidly away by the starlit graves towards the village.

CHAPTER VII.

THINK you I can a resolution fetch
From flowery tenderness ? — *Measure for Measure.*

THEY were on the road to Dover. Maltravers leaned back in the corner of the carriage with his hat over his brows, though the morning was yet too dark for the curate to perceive more than the outline of his features. Milestone after milestone glided by the wheels, and neither of the travellers broke the silence. It was a cold, raw morning, and the mists rose sullenly from the dank hedges and comfortless fields.

Stern and self-accusing was the scrutiny of Maltravers into the recesses of his conscience, and the blotted pages of the Past. That pale and solitary mother, mourning over the grave of her — of his own — child, rose again before his eyes, and seemed silently to ask him for an account of the heart he had made barren, and of the youth to which his love had brought the joylessness of age. With the image of Alice, — afar, alone, whether in her wanderings, a beggar and an outcast, or in that hollow prosperity, in which the very ease of the frame allowed more leisure to the pinings of the heart, — with that image, pure, sorrowing, and faithful from first to last, he compared his own wild and wasted youth, his resort to fancy and to passion for excitement. He contrasted with her patient resignation his own arrogant rebellion against the trials, the bitterness of which his proud spirit had exaggerated; his contempt for the pursuits and aims of others; the imperious indolence of his later life, and his forgetfulness of the duties which Providence had fitted him to discharge. His mind, once so rudely hurled from that complacent pedestal, from which it had so long looked down on men, and said, "I am wiser and better than you," became even too acutely sensitive to its own infirmities; and that desire for Virtue, which

he had ever deeply entertained, made itself more distinctly and loudly heard amidst the ruins and the silence of his pride.

From the contemplation of the Past, he roused himself to face the Future. Alice had refused his hand, Alice herself had ratified and blessed his union with another! Evelyn, so madly loved, — Evelyn might still be his! No law — from the violation of which, even in thought, Human Nature recoils appalled and horror-stricken — forbade him to reclaim her hand, to snatch her from the grasp of Vargrave, to woo again, and again to win her! But did Maltravers welcome, did he embrace that thought? Let us do him justice: he did not. He felt that Alice's resolution, in the first hour of mortified affection, was not to be considered final; and even if it were so, he felt yet more deeply that her love — the love that had withstood so many trials — never could be subdued. Was he to make her nobleness a curse? Was he to say, "Thou hast passed away in thy generation, and I leave thee again to thy solitude for her whom thou hast cherished as a child?" He started in dismay from the thought of this new and last blow upon the shattered spirit; and then fresh and equally sacred obstacles between Evelyn and himself broke slowly on his view. Could Templeton rise from his grave, with what resentment, with what just repugnance, would he have regarded in the betrayer of his wife (even though wife but in name) the suitor to his child!

These thoughts came in fast and fearful force upon Maltravers, and served to strengthen his honour and his conscience. He felt that though, in law, there was no shadow of connection between Evelyn and himself, yet his tie with Alice had been of a nature that ought to separate him from one who had regarded Alice as a mother. The load of horror, the agony of shame, were indeed gone; but still a voice whispered as before, "Evelyn is lost to thee forever!" But so shaken had already been her image in the late storms and convulsion of his soul, that this thought was preferable to the thought of sacrificing Alice. If *that* were all — but Evelyn might still love him; and justice to Alice might be mis-

ery to her! He started from his reverie with a vehement gesture, and groaned audibly.

The curate turned to address to him some words of inquiry and surprise; but the words were unheard, and he perceived, by the advancing daylight, that the countenance of Maltravers was that of a man utterly rapt and absorbed by some mastering and irresistible thought. Wisely, therefore, he left his companion in peace, and returned to his own anxious and engrossing meditations.

The travellers did not rest till they arrived at Dover. The vessel started early the following morning, and Aubrey, who was much fatigued, retired to rest. Maltravers glanced at the clock upon the mantelpiece; it was the hour of nine. For him there was no hope of sleep; and the prospect of the slow night was that of dreary suspense and torturing self-commune.

As he turned restlessly in his seat, the waiter entered to say that there was a gentleman who had caught a glimpse of him below on his arrival, and who was anxious to speak with him. Before Maltravers could answer, the gentleman himself entered, and Maltravers recognized Legard.

"I beg your pardon," said the latter, in a tone of great agitation, "but I was most anxious to see you for a few moments. I have just returned to England — all places alike hateful to me! I read in the papers — an — an announcement — which — which occasions me the greatest — I know not what I would say, — but is it true? Read this paragraph;" and Legard placed "The Courier" before Maltravers.

The passage was as follows: —

"It is whispered that Lord Vargrave, who is now at Paris, is to be married in a few days to the beautiful and wealthy Miss Cameron, to whom he has been long engaged."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Legard, following the eyes of Maltravers, as he glanced over the paragraph. "Were not *you* the lover, — the accepted, the happy lover of Miss Cameron? Speak, tell me, I implore you! — that it was for you, who saved my life and redeemed my honour, and not for that cold schemer, that I renounced all my hopes of earthly hap-

piness, and surrendered the dream of winning the heart and hand of the only woman I ever loved!"

A deep shade fell over the features of Maltravers. He gazed earnestly and long upon the working countenance of Legard, and said, after a pause, —

"You, too, loved her, then? I never knew it, — never guessed it; or, if once I suspected, it was but for a moment; and —"

"Yes," interrupted Legard, passionately, "Heaven is my witness how fervently and truly I did love — I do still love Evelyn Cameron! But when you confessed to me your affection — your hopes — I felt all that I owed you; I felt that I never ought to become your rival. I left Paris abruptly. What I have suffered I will not say; but it was some comfort to think that I had acted as became one who owed you a debt never to be cancelled nor repaid. I travelled from place to place, each equally hateful and wearisome; at last, I scarce know why, I returned to England. I have arrived this day; and now — but tell me, is it true?"

"I believe it true," said Maltravers, in a hollow voice, "that Evelyn is at this moment engaged to Lord Vargrave. I believe it equally true that that engagement, founded upon false impressions, never will be fulfilled. With that hope and that belief, I am on my road to Paris."

"And she will be yours, still?" said Legard, turning away his face: "well, that I can bear. May you be happy, sir!"

"Stay, Legard," said Maltravers, in a voice of great feeling: "let us understand each other better; you have renounced your passion to your sense of honour." Maltravers paused thoughtfully. "It was noble in you, it was more than just to me; I thank you and respect you. But, Legard, was there aught in the manner, the bearing of Evelyn Cameron, that could lead you to suppose that she would have returned your affection? True, had we started on equal terms, I am not vain enough to be blind to your advantages of youth and person; but I believed that the affections of Evelyn were already mine, before we met at Paris."

"It might be so," said Legard, gloomily; "nor is it for me

to say that a heart so pure and generous as Evelyn's could deceive yourself or me. Yet I *had* fancied, I *had* hoped, while you stood aloof, that the partiality with which she regarded you was that of admiration more than love; that you had dazzled her imagination rather than won her heart. I had hoped that I should win, that I was winning, my way to her affection! But let this pass; I drop the subject forever — only, Maltravers, only do me justice. You are a proud man, and your pride has often irritated and stung me, in spite of my gratitude. Be more lenient to me than you have been; think that, though I have my errors and my follies, I am still capable of some conquests over myself. And most sincerely do I now wish that Evelyn's love may be to you that blessing it would have been to me!"

This was, indeed, a new triumph over the pride of Maltravers, — a new humiliation. He had looked with a cold contempt on this man, because he affected not to be above the herd; and this man had preceded him in the very sacrifice he himself meditated.

"Legard," said Maltravers, and a faint blush overspread his face, "you rebuke me justly. I acknowledge my fault, and I ask you to forgive it. From this night, whatever happens, I shall hold it an honour to be admitted to your friendship; from this night, George Legard never shall find in me the offences of arrogance and harshness."

Legard wrung the hand held out to him warmly, but made no answer; his heart was full, and he would not trust himself to speak.

"You think, then," resumed Maltravers, in a more thoughtful tone, — "you think that Evelyn could have loved you, had my pretensions not crossed your own? And you think, also — pardon me, dear Legard — that you could have acquired the steadiness of character, the firmness of purpose, which one so fair, so young, so inexperienced and susceptible, so surrounded by a thousand temptations, would need in a guardian and protector?"

"Oh, do not judge of me by what I have been. I feel that Evelyn could have reformed errors worse than mine; that her

love would have elevated dispositions yet more light and commonplace. You do not know what miracles love works! But now, what is there left for me? What matters it how frivolous and poor the occupations which can distract my thoughts, and bring me forgetfulness? Forgive me; I have no right to obtrude all this egotism on you."

"Do not despond, Legard," said Maltravers, kindly; "there may be better fortunes in store for you than you yet anticipate. I cannot say more now; but will you remain at Dover a few days longer? Within a week you shall hear from me. I will not raise hopes that it may not be mine to realize. But if it be as you think it was, why little, indeed, would rest with me. Nay, look not on me so wistfully," added Maltravers, with a mournful smile; "and let the subject close for the present. You will stay at Dover?"

"I will; but—"

"No buts, Legard; it is so settled."

BOOK XI.

‘Ο ἄνθρωπος εὐεργετὸς πεφυκῶς. — MARCUS ANTONINUS, lib. iii.

“Man is born to be a doer of good.”

CHAPTER I.

His teeth he still did grind,
And grimly gnash, threatening revenge in vain. — SPENSER.

It is now time to return to Lord Vargrave. His most sanguine hopes were realized; all things seemed to prosper. The hand of Evelyn Cameron was pledged to him, the wedding-day was fixed. In less than a week she was to confer upon the ruined peer a splendid dowry, that would smooth all obstacles in the ascent of his ambition. From Mr. Douce he learned that the deeds, which were to transfer to himself the baronial possessions of the head of the house of Maltravers, were nearly completed; and on his wedding-day he hoped to be able to announce that the happy pair had set out for their princely mansion of Lisle Court. In politics, though nothing could be finally settled till his return, letters from Lord Saxingham assured him that all was auspicious: the court and the heads of the aristocracy daily growing more alienated from the premier, and more prepared for a Cabinet revolution. And Vargrave, perhaps, like most needy men, overrated the advantages he should derive from, and the servile opinions he should conciliate in, his new character of landed proprietor and wealthy peer. He was not insensible to the silent anguish that Evelyn seemed to endure, nor to the bitter gloom that hung on the brow of Lady Doltimore.

But these were clouds that foretold no storm, — light shadows that obscured not the serenity of the favouring sky. He continued to seem unconscious to either; to take the coming event as a matter of course, and to Evelyn he evinced so gentle, unfamiliar, respectful, and delicate an attachment, that he left no opening, either for confidence or complaint. Poor Evelyn! her gayety, her enchanting levity, her sweet and infantine playfulness of manner, were indeed vanished. Pale, wan, passive, and smileless, she was the ghost of her former self! But days rolled on, and the evil one drew near; she recoiled, but she never dreamed of resisting. How many equal victims of her age and sex does the altar witness!

One day, at early noon, Lord Vargrave took his way to Evelyn's. He had been to pay a political visit in the Faubourg St. Germain, and he was now slowly crossing the more quiet and solitary part of the gardens of the Tuileries, his hands clasped behind him, after his old, unaltered habit, and his eyes downcast, — when suddenly a man, who was seated alone beneath one of the trees, and who had for some moments watched his steps with an anxious and wild aspect, rose and approached him. Lord Vargrave was not conscious of the intrusion, till the man laid his hand on Vargrave's arm, and exclaimed, —

"It is he! it is! Lumley Ferrers, we meet again!"

Lord Vargrave started and changed colour, as he gazed on the intruder.

"Ferrers," continued Cesarini (for it was he), and he wound his arm firmly into Lord Vargrave's as he spoke, "you have not changed; your step is light, your cheek healthful; and yet I — you can scarcely recognize me. Oh, I have suffered so horribly since we parted! Why is this? Why have I been so heavily visited, and why have you gone free? Heaven is not just!"

Castruccio was in one of his lucid intervals; but there was that in his uncertain eye, and strange unnatural voice, which showed that a breath might dissolve the avalanche. Lord Vargrave looked anxiously round; none were near: but he knew that the more public parts of the garden were thronged,

and through the trees he saw many forms moving in the distance. He felt that the sound of his voice could summon assistance in an instant, and his assurance returned to him.

"My poor friend," said he soothingly, as he quickened his pace, "it grieves me to the heart to see you look ill; do not think so much of what is past."

"There is no past!" replied Cesarini, gloomily. "The Past is my Present! And I have thought and thought, in darkness and in chains, over all that I have endured, and a light has broken on me in the hours when they told me I was mad! Lumley Ferrers, it was not for my sake that you led me, devil as you are, into the lowest hell! You had some object of your own to serve in separating *her* from Maltravers. You made me your instrument. What was I to you that you should have sinned for *my* sake? Answer me, and truly, if those lips can utter truth!"

"Cesarini," returned Vargrave, in his blandest accents, "another time we will converse on what has been; believe me, my only object was your happiness, combined, it may be, with my hatred of your rival."

"Liar!" shouted Cesarini, grasping Vargrave's arm with the strength of growing madness, while his burning eyes were fixed upon his tempter's changing countenance. "You, too, loved Florence; you, too, sought her hand; *you* were my real rival!"

"Hush! my friend, hush!" said Vargrave, seeking to shake off the gripe of the maniac, and becoming seriously alarmed; "we are approaching the crowded part of the gardens, we shall be observed."

"And why are men made my foes? Why is my own sister become my persecutor? Why should she give me up to the torturer and the dungeon? Why are serpents and fiends my comrades? Why is there fire in my brain and heart; and why do you go free and enjoy liberty and life? Observed! what care *you* for observation? All men search for *me*!"

"Then why so openly expose yourself to their notice; why —"

"Hear me!" interrupted Cesarini. "When I escaped from

the horrible prison into which I was plunged; when I scented the fresh air, and bounded over the grass; when I was again free in limbs and spirit, — a sudden strain of music from a village came on my ear, and I stopped short, and crouched down, and held my breath to listen. It ceased; and I thought I had been with Florence, and I wept bitterly! When I recovered, memory came back to me distinct and clear; and I heard a voice say to me, ‘Avenge her and thyself!’ From that hour the voice has been heard again, morning and night! Lumley Ferrers, I hear it now! it speaks to my heart, it warms my blood, it nerves my hand! On whom should vengeance fall? Speak to me!”

Lumley strode rapidly on. They were now without the grove; a gay throng was before them. “All is safe,” thought the Englishman. He turned abruptly and haughtily on Cesarini, and waved his hand; “Begone, madman!” said he, in a loud and stern voice, — “begone! vex me no more, or I give you into custody. Begone, I say!”

Cesarini halted, amazed and awed for the moment; and then, with a dark scowl and a low cry, threw himself on Vargrave. The eye and hand of the latter were vigilant and prepared; he grasped the uplifted arm of the maniac, and shouted for help. But the madman was now in his full fury; he hurled Vargrave to the ground with a force for which the peer was not prepared, and Lumley might never have risen a living man from that spot, if two soldiers, seated close by, had not hastened to his assistance. Cesarini was already kneeling on his breast, and his long bony fingers were fastening upon the throat of his intended victim. Torn from his hold, he glared fiercely on his new assailants; and after a fierce but momentary struggle, wrested himself from their gripe. Then, turning round to Vargrave, who had with some effort risen from the ground, he shrieked out, “I shall have thee yet!” and fled through the trees and disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

AH, who is nigh ? Come to me, friend or foe !
My parks, my walks, my manors that I had,
Ev'n now forsake me. — *Henry VI.* Part iii.

LORD VARGRAVE, bold as he was by nature, in vain endeavoured to banish from his mind the gloomy impression which the startling interview with Cesarini had bequeathed. The face, the voice of the maniac, haunted him, as the shape of the warning wraith haunts the mountaineer. He returned at once to his hotel, unable for some hours to collect himself sufficiently to pay his customary visit to Miss Cameron. Inly resolving not to hazard a second meeting with the Italian during the rest of his sojourn at Paris by venturing in the streets on foot, he ordered his carriage towards evening; dined at the Café de Paris; and then re-entered his carriage to proceed to Lady Doltimore's house.

"I beg your pardon, my lord," said his servant, as he closed the carriage-door, "but I forgot to say that, a short time after you returned this morning, a strange gentleman asked at the porter's lodge if Mr. Ferrers was not staying at the hotel. The porter said there was no Mr. Ferrers, but the gentleman insisted upon it that he had seen Mr. Ferrers enter. I was in the lodge at the moment, my lord, and I explained —"

"That Mr. Ferrers and Lord Vargrave are one and the same? What sort of looking person?"

"Thin and dark, my lord, — evidently a foreigner. When I said that you were now Lord Vargrave, he stared a moment, and said very abruptly that he recollected it perfectly, and then he laughed and walked away."

"Did he not ask to see me?"

"No, my lord; he said he should take another opportunity. He was a strange-looking gentleman, and his clothes were threadbare."

"Ah, some troublesome petitioner. Perhaps a Pole in distress! Remember I am never at home when he calls. Shut the door. To Lady Doltimore's."

Lumley's heart beat as he threw himself back, — he again felt the gripe of the madman at his throat. He saw, at once, that Cesarini had dogged him; he resolved the next morning to change his hotel, and to apply to the police. It was strange how sudden and keen a fear had entered the breast of this callous and resolute man!

On arriving at Lady Doltimore's, he found Caroline alone in the drawing-room. It was a *tête-à-tête* that he by no means desired.

"Lord Vargrave," said Caroline, coldly, "I wished a short conversation with you; and finding you did not come in the morning, I sent you a note an hour ago. Did you receive it?"

"No; I have been from home since six o'clock, — it is now nine."

"Well, then, Vargrave," said Caroline, with a compressed and writhing lip, and turning very pale, "I tremble to tell you that I fear Doltimore suspects. He looked at me sternly this morning, and said, 'You seem unhappy, madam; this marriage of Lord Vargrave's distresses you!'"

"I warned you how it would be, — your own selfishness will betray and ruin you."

"Do not reproach me, man!" said Lady Doltimore, with great vehemence. "From you at least I have a right to pity, to forbearance, to succour. I will not bear reproach from you."

"I reproach you for your own sake, for the faults you commit against yourself; and I must say, Caroline, that after I had generously conquered all selfish feeling, and assisted you to so desirable and even brilliant a position, it is neither just nor high-minded in you to evince so ungracious a reluctance to my taking the only step which can save me from actual ruin. But what does Doltimore suspect? What ground has he for suspicion, beyond that want of command

of countenance which it is easy to explain, — and which it is yet easier for a woman and a great lady [here Lumley sneered] to acquire?”

“I know not; it has been put into his head. Paris is so full of slander. But, Vargrave — Lumley — I tremble, I shudder with terror, if ever Doltimore should discover —”

“Pooh! pooh! Our conduct at Paris has been most guarded, most discreet. Doltimore is Self-conceit personified, — and Self-conceit is horn-eyed. I am about to leave Paris, — about to marry, from under your own roof; a little prudence, a little self-control, a smiling face, when you wish us happiness, and so forth, and all is safe. Tush! think of it no more! Fate has cut and shuffled the cards for you; the game is yours, unless you revoke. Pardon my metaphor; it is a favourite one, — I have worn it threadbare; but human life *is* so like a rubber at whist. Where is Evelyn?”

“In her own room. Have you no pity for her?”

“She will be very happy when she is Lady Vargrave; and for the rest, I shall neither be a stern nor a jealous husband. She might not have given the same character to the magnificent Maltravers.”

Here Evelyn entered; and Vargrave hastened to press her hand, to whisper tender salutations and compliments, to draw the easy-chair to the fire, to place the footstool, — to lavish the *petits soins* that are so agreeable, when they are the small moralities of love.

Evelyn was more than usually pale, — more than usually abstracted. There was no lustre in her eye, no life in her step; she seemed unconscious of the crisis to which she approached. As the myrrh and hyssop which drugged the malefactors of old into forgetfulness of their doom, so there are griefs which stupefy before their last and crowning consummation!

Vargrave conversed lightly on the weather, the news, the last book. Evelyn answered but in monosyllables; and Caroline, with a hand-screen before her face, preserved an unbroken silence. Thus gloomy and joyless were two of the party, thus gay and animated the third, when the clock on the mantel-

piece struck ten; and as the last stroke died, and Evelyn sighed heavily, — for it was an hour nearer to the fatal day, — the door was suddenly thrown open, and pushing aside the servant, two gentlemen entered the room.

Caroline, the first to perceive them, started from her seat with a faint exclamation of surprise. Vargrave turned abruptly, and saw before him the stern countenance of Maltravers.

“My child! my Evelyn!” exclaimed a familiar voice; and Evelyn had already flown into the arms of Aubrey.

The sight of the curate in company with Maltravers explained all at once to Vargrave. He saw that the mask was torn from his face, the prize snatched from his grasp, his falsehood known, his plot counterworked, his villany baffled! He struggled in vain for self-composure; all his resources of courage and craft seemed drained and exhausted. Livid, speechless, almost trembling, he cowered beneath the eyes of Maltravers.

Evelyn, not as yet aware of the presence of her former lover, was the first to break the silence. She lifted her face in alarm from the bosom of the good curate. “My mother — she is well — she lives — what brings you hither?”

“Your mother is well, my child. I have come hither at her earnest request to save you from a marriage with that unworthy man!”

Lord Vargrave smiled a ghastly smile, but made no answer.

“Lord Vargrave,” said Maltravers, “you will feel at once that you have no further business under this roof. Let us withdraw, — I have much to thank you for.”

“I will not stir!” exclaimed Vargrave, passionately, and stamping on the floor. “Miss Cameron, the guest of Lady Doltimore, whose house and presence you thus rudely profane, is my affianced bride, — affianced with her own consent. Evelyn, beloved Evelyn! mine you are yet; you alone can cancel the bond. Sir, I know not what you have to say, what mystery in your immaculate life to disclose; but unless Lady Doltimore, whom your violence appalls and terrifies, orders me to quit her roof, it is not I, — it is yourself, who are the

intruder! Lady Doltimore, with your permission, I will direct your servants to conduct this gentleman to his carriage!"

"Lady Doltimore, pardon me," said Maltravers, coldly; "I will not be urged to any failure of respect to you. My lord, if the most abject cowardice be not added to your other vices, you will not make this room the theatre for our altercation. I invite you, in those terms which no gentleman ever yet refused, to withdraw with me."

The tone and manner of Maltravers exercised a strange control over Vargrave; he endeavoured in vain to keep alive the passion into which he had sought to work himself; his voice faltered, his head sank upon his breast. Between these two personages, none interfered; around them, all present grouped in breathless silence, — Caroline, turning her eyes from one to the other in wonder and dismay; Evelyn, believing all a dream, yet alive only to the thought that, by some merciful interposition of Providence, she should escape the consequences of her own rashness, clinging to Aubrey, with her gaze riveted on Maltravers; and Aubrey, whose gentle character was borne down and silenced by the powerful and tempestuous passions that now met in collision and conflict, withheld by his abhorrence of Vargrave's treachery from his natural desire to propitiate, and yet appalled by the apprehension of bloodshed, that for the first time crossed him.

There was a moment of dead silence, in which Vargrave seemed to be nerving and collecting himself for such course as might be best to pursue, when again the door opened, and the name of Mr. Howard was announced.

Hurried and agitated, the young secretary, scarcely noticing the rest of the party, rushed to Lord Vargrave.

"My lord! a thousand pardons for interrupting you, — business of such importance! I am so fortunate to find you!"

"What is the matter, sir?"

"These letters, my lord; I have so much to say!"

Any interruption, even an earthquake, at that moment must have been welcome to Vargrave. He bent his head,

with a polite smile, linked his arm into his secretary's, and withdrew to the recess of the farthest window. Not a minute elapsed before he turned away with a look of scornful exultation. "Mr. Howard," said he, "go and refresh yourself, and come to me at twelve o'clock to-night; I shall be at home then." The secretary bowed, and withdrew.

"Now, sir," said Vargrave, to Maltravers, "I am willing to leave you in possession of the field. Miss Cameron, it will be, I fear, impossible for me to entertain any longer the bright hopes I had once formed; my cruel fate compels me to seek wealth in any matrimonial engagement. I regret to inform you that you are no longer the great heiress; the whole of your capital was placed in the hands of Mr. Douce for the completion of the purchase of Lisle Court. Mr. Douce is a bankrupt; he has fled to America. This letter is an express from my lawyer; the house has closed its payments! Perhaps we may hope to obtain sixpence in the pound. I am a loser also; the forfeit money bequeathed to me is gone. I know not whether, as your trustee, I am not accountable for the loss of your fortune (drawn out on my responsibility); probably so. But as I have not now a shilling in the world, I doubt whether Mr. Maltravers will advise you to institute proceedings against me. Mr. Maltravers, to-morrow, at nine o'clock, I will listen to what you have to say. I wish you all good-night." He bowed, seized his hat, and vanished.

"Evelyn," said Aubrey, "can you require to learn more; do you not already feel you are released from union with a man without heart and honour?"

"Yes, yes! I am so happy!" cried Evelyn, bursting into tears. "This hated wealth, — I feel not its loss; I am released from all duty to my benefactor. I am free!"

The last tie that had yet united the guilty Caroline to Vargrave was broken, — a woman forgives sin in her lover, but never meanness. The degrading, the abject position in which she had seen one whom she had served as a slave (though, as yet, all his worst villanies were unknown to her), filled her with shame, horror, and disgust. She rose abruptly, and quitted the room. They did not miss her.

Maltravers approached Evelyn; he took her hand, and pressed it to his lips and heart.

"Evelyn," said he, mournfully, "you require an explanation, — to-morrow I will give and seek it. To-night we are both too unnerved for such communications. I can only now feel joy at your escape, and hope that I may still minister to your future happiness."

"But," said Aubrey, "can we believe this new and astounding statement? Can this loss be so irremediable; may we not yet take precaution, and save, at least, some wrecks of this noble fortune?"

"I thank you for recalling me to the world," said Maltravers, eagerly. "I will see to it this instant; and to-morrow, Evelyn, after my interview with you, I will hasten to London, and act in that capacity still left to me, — your guardian, your friend."

He turned away his face, and hurried to the door.

Evelyn clung more closely to Aubrey. "But you will not leave me to-night? You can stay? We can find you accommodation; do not leave me."

"Leave you, my child! no; we have a thousand things to say to each other. I will not," he added in a whisper, turning to Maltravers, "forestall your communications."

CHAPTER III.

ALACK, 'tis he. Why, he was met even now
As mad as the vexed sea. — *Lear*.

IN the Rue de la Paix there resided an English lawyer of eminence, with whom Maltravers had had previous dealings; to this gentleman he now drove. He acquainted him with the news he had just heard, respecting the bankruptcy of Mr. Douce; and commissioned him to leave Paris, the first moment he could obtain a passport, and to proceed to London

At all events, he would arrive there some hours before Maltravers; and those hours were something gained. This done, he drove to the nearest hotel, which chanced to be the Hotel de M——, where, though he knew it not, it so happened that Lord Vargrave himself lodged. As his carriage stopped without, while the porter unclosed the gates, a man, who had been loitering under the lamps, darted forward, and prying into the carriage-window, regarded Maltravers earnestly. The latter, pre-occupied and absorbed, did not notice him; but when the carriage drove into the courtyard it was followed by the stranger, who was muffled in a worn and tattered cloak, and whose movements were unheeded amidst the bustle of the arrival. The porter's wife led the way to a second-floor, just left vacant, and the waiter began to arrange the fire. Maltravers threw himself abstractedly upon the sofa, insensible to all around him, when, lifting his eyes, he saw before him the countenance of Cesarini! The Italian (supposed, perhaps, by the persons of the hotel to be one of the newcomers) was leaning over the back of a chair, supporting his face with his hand, and fixing his eyes with an earnest and sorrowful expression upon the features of his ancient rival. When he perceived that he was recognized, he approached Maltravers, and said in Italian, and in a low voice, "You are the man of all others, whom, save one, I most desired to see. I have much to say to you, and my time is short. Spare me a few minutes."

The tone and manner of Cesarini were so calm and rational that they changed the first impulse of Maltravers, which was that of securing a maniac; while the Italian's emaciated countenance, his squalid garments, the air of penury and want diffused over his whole appearance, irresistibly invited compassion. With all the more anxious and pressing thoughts that weighed upon him, Maltravers could not refuse the conference thus demanded. He dismissed the attendants, and motioned Cesarini to be seated.

The Italian drew near to the fire, which now blazed brightly and cheerily, and, spreading his thin hands to the flame, seemed to enjoy the physical luxury of the warmth. "Cold, cold," he said piteously, as to himself; "Nature is a very bit-

ter protector. But frost and famine are, at least, more merciful than slavery and darkness."

At this moment Ernest's servant entered to know if his master would not take refreshments, for he had scarcely touched food upon the road. And as he spoke, Cesarini turned keenly and wistfully round. There was no mistaking the appeal. Wine and cold meat were ordered: and when the servant vanished, Cesarini turned to Maltravers with a strange smile, and said, "You see what the love of liberty brings men to! They found me plenty in the jail! But I have read of men who feasted merrily before execution — have not you? — and my hour is at hand. All this day I have felt chained by an irresistible destiny to this house. But it was not you I sought; no matter, in the crisis of our doom all its agents meet together. It is the last act of a dreary play!"

The Italian turned again to the fire, and bent over it, muttering to himself.

Maltravers remained silent and thoughtful. Now was the moment once more to place the maniac under the kindly vigilance of his family, to snatch him from the horrors, perhaps, of starvation itself, to which his escape condemned him: if he could detain Cesarini till De Montaigne could arrive!

Agreeably to this thought, he quietly drew towards him the portfolio which had been laid on the table, and, Cesarini's back still turned to him, wrote a hasty line to De Montaigne. When his servant re-entered with the wine and viands, Maltravers followed him out of the room, and bade him see the note sent immediately. On returning, he found Cesarini devouring the food before him with all the voracity of famine. It was a dreadful sight! — the intellect ruined, the mind darkened, the wild, fierce animal alone left!

When Cesarini had appeased his hunger, he drew near to Maltravers, and thus accosted him, —

"I must lead you back to the past. I sinned against you and the dead; but Heaven has avenged you, and me you can pity and forgive. Maltravers, there is another more guilty than I, — but proud, prosperous, and great. *His* crime Heaven has left to the revenge of man! I bound myself

by an oath not to reveal his villany. I cancel the oath now, for the knowledge of it should survive his life and mine. And, mad though they deem me, the mad are prophets, and a solemn conviction, a voice not of earth, tells me that he and I are already in the Shadow of Death."

Here Cesarini, with a calm and precise accuracy of self-possession, — a minuteness of circumstance and detail, that, coming from one whose very eyes betrayed his terrible disease, was infinitely thrilling in its effect, — related the counsels, the persuasions, the stratagems of Lumley. Slowly and distinctly he forced into the heart of Maltravers that sickening record of cold fraud calculating on vehement passion as its tool; and thus he concluded his narration, —

"Now wonder no longer why I have lived till this hour; why I have clung to freedom, through want and hunger, amidst beggars, felons, and outcasts! In that freedom was my last hope, — the hope of revenge!"

Maltravers returned no answer for some moments. At length he said calmly, "Cesarini, there are injuries so great that they defy revenge. Let us alike, since we are alike injured, trust our cause to Him who reads all hearts, and, better than we can do, measures both crime and its excuses. You think that our enemy has not suffered, — that he has gone free. We know not his internal history; prosperity and power are no signs of happiness, they bring no exemption from care. Be soothed and be ruled, Cesarini. Let the stone once more close over the solemn grave. Turn with me to the future; and let us rather seek to be the judges of ourselves, than the executioners of another."

Cesarini listened gloomily, and was about to answer, when —

But here we must return to Lord Vargrave.

CHAPTER IV.

MY noble lord,
Your worthy friends do lack you. — *Macbeth*.

He is about it;
The doors are open. — *Ibid*.

ON quitting Lady Doltimore's house, Lumley drove to his hotel. His secretary had been the bearer of other communications, with the nature of which he had not yet acquainted himself; but he saw by the superscriptions that they were of great importance. Still, however, even in the solitude and privacy of his own chamber, it was not on the instant that he could divert his thoughts from the ruin of his fortunes: the loss not only of Evelyn's property, but his own claims upon it (for the whole capital had been placed in Douce's hands), the total wreck of his grand scheme, the triumph he had afforded to Maltravers! He ground his teeth in impotent rage, and groaned aloud, as he traversed his room with hasty and uneven strides. At last he paused and muttered: "Well, the spider toils on even when its very power of weaving fresh webs is exhausted; it lies in wait, — it forces itself into the webs of others. Brave insect, thou art my model! While I have breath in my body, the world and all its crosses, Fortune and all her malignity, shall not prevail against me! What man ever yet failed until he himself grew craven, and sold his soul to the arch fiend, Despair! 'T is but a girl and a fortune lost, — they were gallantly fought for, that is some comfort. Now to what is yet left to me!"

The first letter Lumley opened was from Lord Saxingham. It filled him with dismay. The question at issue had been formally, but abruptly, decided in the Cabinet against Vargrave and his manœuvres. Some hasty expressions of Lord Saxingham had been instantly caught at by the premier, and

a resignation, rather hinted at than declared, had been peremptorily accepted. Lord Saxingham and Lumley's adherents in the Government were to a man dismissed; and at the time Lord Saxingham wrote the premier was with the king.

"Curse their folly! — the puppets! the dolts!" exclaimed Lumley, crushing the letter in his hand. "The moment I leave them, they run their heads against the wall. Curse them! curse myself! curse the man who weaves ropes with sand! Nothing — nothing left for me but exile or suicide! Stay, what is this?" His eye fell on the well-known handwriting of the premier. He tore the envelope, impatient to know the worst. His eyes sparkled as he proceeded. The letter was most courteous, most complimentary, most wooing. The minister was a man consummately versed in the arts that increase, as well as those which purge, a party. Saxingham and his friends were imbeciles, incapables, mostly men who had outlived their day. But Lord Vargrave, in the prime of life — versatile, accomplished, vigorous, bitter, unscrupulous — Vargrave was of another mould, Vargrave was to be dreaded; and therefore, if possible, to be retained. His powers of mischief were unquestionably increased by the universal talk of London that he was about soon to wed so wealthy a lady. The minister knew his man. In terms of affected regret, he alluded to the loss the Government would sustain in the services of Lord Saxingham, etc.; he rejoiced that Lord Vargrave's absence from London had prevented his being prematurely mixed up, by false scruples of honour, in secessions which his judgment must condemn. He treated of the question in dispute with the most delicate address, — confessed the reasonableness of Lord Vargrave's former opposition to it; but contended that it was now, if not wise, inevitable. He said nothing of the *justice* of the measure he proposed to adopt, but much on the *expediency*. He concluded by offering to Vargrave, in the most cordial and flattering terms, the very seat in the Cabinet which Lord Saxingham had vacated, with an apology for its inadequacy to his lordship's merits, and a distinct and definite promise of the refusal of the gorgeous

vicerealty of India, which would be vacant next year by the return of the present governor-general.

Unprincipled as Vargrave was, it is not, perhaps, judging him too mildly to say that, had he succeeded in obtaining Evelyn's hand and fortune, he would have shrunk from the baseness he now meditated. To step coldly into the very post of which he, and he alone, had been the cause of depriving his earliest patron and nearest relative; to profit by the betrayal of his own party; to damn himself eternally in the eyes of his ancient friends; to pass down the stream of history as a mercenary apostate, — from all this Vargrave must have shrunk, had he seen one spot of honest ground on which to maintain his footing. But now the waters of the abyss were closing over his head; he would have caught at a straw; how much more consent to be picked up by the vessel of an enemy! All objection, all scruple, vanished at once. And the "barbaric gold" "of Ormus and of Ind" glittered before the greedy eyes of the penniless adventurer! Not a day was now to be lost. How fortunate that a written proposition, from which it was impossible to recede, had been made to him before the failure of his matrimonial projects had become known! Too happy to quit Paris, he would set off on the morrow, and conclude in person the negotiation. Vargrave glanced towards the clock; it was scarcely past eleven. What revolutions are worked in moments! Within an hour he had lost a wife, a noble fortune, changed the politics of his whole life, stepped into a Cabinet office, and was already calculating how much a governor-general of India could lay by in five years! But it was only eleven o'clock. He had put off Mr. Howard's visit till twelve; he wished so much to see him, and learn all the London gossip connected with the recent events. Poor Mr. Douce! Vargrave had already forgotten *his* existence! — he rang his bell hastily. It was some time before his servant answered.

Promptitude and readiness were virtues that Lord Vargrave peremptorily demanded in a servant; and as he paid the best price for the articles — less in wages than in plunder — he was generally sure to obtain them.

"Where the deuce have you been? This is the third time I have rung! you ought to be in the anteroom!"

"I beg your lordship's pardon; but I was helping Mr. Maltravers's valet to find a key which he dropped in the courtyard."

"Mr. Maltravers! Is he at this hotel?"

"Yes, my lord; his rooms are just overhead."

"Humph! Has Mr. Howard engaged a lodging here?"

"No, my lord. He left word that he was gone to his aunt, Lady Jane."

"Ah, Lady Jane — lives at Paris — so she does; Rue Chaussée d'Antin — you know the house? Go immediately — go yourself; don't trust to a messenger — and beg Mr. Howard to return with you. I want to see him instantly."

"Yes, my lord."

The servant went. Lumley was in a mood in which solitude was intolerable. He was greatly excited; and some natural compunctions at the course on which he had decided made him long to escape from thought. So Maltravers was under the same roof! He had promised to give him an interview next day; but next day he wished to be on the road to London. Why not have it over to-night? But could Maltravers meditate any hostile proceedings? Impossible! Whatever his causes of complaint, they were of too delicate and secret a nature for seconds, bullets, and newspaper paragraphs! Vargrave might feel secure that he should not be delayed by any Bois de Boulogne assignation; but it was necessary to *his honour* (!) that he should not seem to shun the man he had deceived and wronged. He would go up to him at once, — a new excitement would distract his thoughts. Agreeably to this resolution, Lord Vargrave quitted his room, and was about to close the outer door, when he recollected that perhaps his servant might not meet with Howard; that the secretary might probably arrive before the time fixed, — it would be as well to leave his door open. He accordingly stopped, and writing upon a piece of paper, "Dear Howard, send up for me the moment you arrive: I shall be with Mr. Maltravers *au second*" — Vargrave wafered the *affiche* to the

door, which he then left ajar, and the lamp in the landing-place fell clear and full on the paper.

It was the voice of Vargrave, in the little stone-paven antechamber without, inquiring of the servant if Mr. Maltravers was at home, which had startled and interrupted Cesarini as he was about to reply to Ernest. Each recognized that sharp clear voice; each glanced at the other.

"I will not see him," said Maltravers, hastily moving towards the door; "you are not fit to —"

"Meet him? no!" said Cesarini, with a furtive and sinister glance, which a man versed in his disease would have understood, but which Maltravers did not even observe; "I will retire into your bedroom; my eyes are heavy. I could sleep."

He opened the inner door as he spoke, and had scarcely reclosed it before Vargrave entered.

"Your servant said you were engaged; but I thought you might see an old friend:" and Vargrave coolly seated himself.

Maltravers drew the bolt across the door that separated them from Cesarini; and the two men, whose characters and lives were so strongly contrasted, were now alone.

"You wished an interview,—an explanation," said Lumley; "I shrink from neither. Let me forestall inquiry and complaint. I deceived you knowingly and deliberately, it is quite true,—all stratagems are fair in love and war. The prize was vast! I believed my career depended on it: I could not resist the temptation. I knew that before long you would learn that Evelyn was not your daughter; that the first communication between yourself and Lady Vargrave would betray me; but it was worth trying a *coup de main*. You have foiled me, and conquered: be it so; I congratulate you. You are tolerably rich, and the loss of Evelyn's fortune will not vex you as it would have done me."

"Lord Vargrave, it is but poor affectation to treat thus lightly the dark falsehood you conceived, the awful curse you inflicted upon me. Your sight is now so painful to me, it so stirs the passions that I would seek to suppress, that the sooner our interview is terminated the better. I have to

charge you, also, with a crime, — not, perhaps, baser than the one you so calmly own, but the consequences of which were more fatal: you understand me?"

"I do not."

"Do not tempt me! do not lie!" said Maltravers, still in a calm voice, though his passions, naturally so strong, shook his whole frame. "To your arts I owe the exile of years that should have been better spent; to those arts Cesarini owes the wreck of his reason, and Florence Lascelles her early grave! Ah, you are pale now; your tongue cleaves to your mouth! And think you these crimes will go forever unrequited; think you that there is no justice in the thunderbolts of God?"

"Sir," said Vargrave, starting to his feet, "I know not what you suspect, I care not what you believe! But I am accountable to man, and that account I am willing to render. You threatened me in the presence of my ward; you spoke of cowardice, and hinted at danger. Whatever my faults, want of courage is not one. Stand by your threats, — I am ready to brave them!"

"A year, perhaps a short month, ago," replied Maltravers, "and I would have arrogated justice to my own mortal hand; nay, this very night, had the hazard of either of our lives been necessary to save Evelyn from your persecution, I would have incurred all things for her sake! But that is past; from me you have nothing to fear. The proofs of your earlier guilt, with its dreadful results, would alone suffice to warn me from the solemn responsibility of human vengeance. Great Heaven! what hand could dare to send a criminal so long hardened, so black with crime, unatoning, unrepentant, and unprepared, before the judgment-seat of the ALL JUST? Go, unhappy man! may life long be spared to you! Awake! awake from this world, before your feet pass the irrevocable boundary of the next!"

"I came not here to listen to homilies, and the cant of the conventicle," said Vargrave, vainly struggling for a haughtiness of mien that his conscience-stricken aspect terribly belied; "not I; but this wrong world is to be blamed, if deeds that strict morality may not justify, but the effects of which

I, no prophet, could not foresee, were necessary for success in life. I have been but as all other men have been who struggle against fortune to be rich and great: ambition must make use of foul ladders."

"Oh," said Maltravers, earnestly, touched involuntarily, and in spite of his abhorrence of the criminal, by the relenting that this miserable attempt at self-justification seemed to denote, — "oh, be warned, while it is yet time; wrap not yourself in these paltry sophistries; look back to your past career; see to what heights you might have climbed, if — with those rare gifts and energies, with that subtle sagacity and indomitable courage — your ambition had but chosen the straight, not the crooked, path. Pause! many years may yet, in the course of nature, afford you time to retrace your steps, to atone to thousands the injuries you have inflicted on the few. I know not why I thus address you: but something diviner than indignation urges me; something tells me that you are already on the brink of the abyss!"

Lord Vargrave changed colour, nor did he speak for some moments; then raising his head, with a faint smile, he said, "Maltravers, you are a false soothsayer. At this moment my paths, crooked though they be, have led me far towards the summit of my proudest hopes; the straight path would have left me at the foot of the mountain. You yourself are a beacon against the course you advise. Let us contrast each other. You took the straight path, I the crooked. You, my superior in fortune; you, infinitely above me in genius; you, born to command and never to crouch: how do we stand now, each in the prime of life? You, with a barren and profitless reputation; without rank, without power, almost without the hope of power. I — but you know not my new dignity — I, in the Cabinet of England's ministry, vast fortunes opening to my gaze, the proudest station not too high for my reasonable ambition! You, wedding yourself to some grand chimera of an object, aimless when it eludes your grasp. I, swinging, squirrel-like, from scheme to scheme; no matter if one breaks, another is at hand! Some men would have cut their throats in despair, an hour ago, in losing the object of a seven

years' chase, — Beauty and Wealth, both! I open a letter, and find success in one quarter to counterbalance failure in another. Bah! bah! each to his *métier*, Maltravers! For you, honour, melancholy, and, if it please you, repentance also! For me, the onward, rushing life, never looking back to the Past, never balancing the stepping-stones to the Future. Let us not envy each other; if you were not Diogenes, you would be Alexander. Adieu! our interview is over. Will you forget and forgive, and shake hands once more? You draw back, you frown! well, perhaps you are right. If we meet again — ”

“It will be as strangers.”

“No rash vows! you may return to politics, you may want office. I am of your way of thinking now: and — ha! ha! — poor Lumley Ferrers could make you a Lord of the Treasury; smooth travelling and cheap turnpikes on crooked paths, believe me. Farewell!”

On entering the room into which Cesarini had retired, Maltravers found him flown. His servant said that the gentleman had gone away shortly after Lord Vargrave's arrival. Ernest reproached himself bitterly for neglecting to secure the door that conducted to the ante-chamber; but still it was probable that Cesarini would return in the morning.

The messenger who had taken the letter to De Montaigne brought back word that the latter was at his villa, but expected at Paris early the next day. Maltravers hoped to see him before his departure; meanwhile he threw himself on his bed, and despite all the anxieties that yet oppressed him, the fatigues and excitements he had undergone exhausted even the endurance of that iron frame, and he fell into a profound slumber.

CHAPTER V.

By eight to-morrow
Thou shalt be made immortal.

Measure for Measure.

LORD VARGRAVE returned to his apartment to find Mr. Howard, who had but just that instant arrived, warming his white and well-ringed hands by the fire. He conversed with him for half an hour on all the topics on which the secretary could give him information, and then dismissed him once more to the roof of Lady Jane.

As he slowly undressed himself, he saw on his writing-table the note which Lady Doltimore had referred to, and which he had not yet opened. He lazily broke the seal, ran his eye carelessly over its few blotted words of remorse and alarm, and threw it down again with a contemptuous "pshaw!" Thus unequally are the sorrows of a guilty tie felt by the man of the world and the woman of society!

As his servant placed before him his wine and water, Vargrave told him to see early to the preparations for departure, and to call him at nine o'clock.

"Shall I shut that door, my lord?" said the valet, pointing to one that communicated with one of those large closets, or *armoires*, that are common appendages to French bedrooms, and in which wood and sundry other matters are kept.

"No," said Lord Vargrave, petulantly; "you servants are so fond of excluding every breath of air. I should never have a window open, if I did not open it myself. Leave the door as it is, and do not be later than nine to-morrow."

The servant, who slept in a kind of kennel that communicated with the anteroom, did as he was bid; and Vargrave put out his candle, betook himself to bed, and, after drowsily gazing some minutes on the dying embers of the fire, which

threw a dim ghastly light over the chamber, fell fast asleep. The clock struck the first hour of morning, and in that house all seemed still.

The next morning, Maltravers was disturbed from his slumber by De Montaigne, who, arriving, as was often his wont, at an early hour from his villa, had found Ernest's note of the previous evening.

Maltravers rose and dressed himself; and while De Montaigne was yet listening to the account which his friend gave of his adventure with Cesarini, and the unhappy man's accusation of his accomplice, Ernest's servant entered the room very abruptly.

"Sir," said he, "I thought you might like to know. What is to be done? The whole hotel is in confusion, Mr. Howard has been sent for, and Lord Doltimore. So very strange, so sudden!"

"What is the matter? Speak plain."

"Lord Vargrave, sir, — poor Lord Vargrave —"

"Lord Vargrave!"

"Yes, sir; the master of the hotel, hearing you knew his lordship, would be so glad if you would come down. Lord Vargrave, sir, is dead, — found dead in his bed!"

Maltravers was rooted to the spot with amaze and horror. Dead! and but last night so full of life and schemes and hope and ambition.

As soon as he recovered himself, he hurried to the spot, and De Montaigne followed. The latter, as they descended the stairs, laid his hand on Ernest's arm and detained him.

"Did you say that Castruccio left the apartment while Vargrave was with you, and almost immediately after his narrative of Vargrave's instigation to his crime?"

"Yes."

The eyes of the friends met; a terrible suspicion possessed both. "No; it is impossible!" exclaimed Maltravers. "How could he obtain entrance, how pass Lord Vargrave's servants? No, no; think of it not!"

They hurried down the stairs; they reached the other door of Vargrave's apartment. The notice to Howard, with the

name of Vargrave underscored, was still on the panels. De Montaigne saw and shuddered.

They were in the room by the bedside. A group were collected round; they gave way as the Englishman and his friend approached; and the eyes of Maltravers suddenly rested on the face of Lord Vargrave, which was locked, rigid, and convulsed.

There was a buzz of voices which had ceased at the entrance of Maltravers; it was now renewed. A surgeon had been summoned—the nearest surgeon,—a young Englishman of no great repute or name. He was making inquiries as he bent over the corpse.

“Yes, sir,” said Lord Vargrave’s servant, “his lordship told me to call him at nine o’clock. I came in at that hour, but his lordship did not move nor answer me. I then looked to see if he were very sound asleep, and I saw that the pillows had got somehow over his face, and his head seemed to lie very low; so I moved the pillows, and I saw that his lordship was dead.”

“Sir,” said the surgeon, turning to Maltravers, “you were a friend of his lordship, I hear. I have already sent for Mr. Howard and Lord Doltimore. Shall I speak with you a minute?”

Maltravers nodded assent. The surgeon cleared the room of all but himself, De Montaigne, and Maltravers.

“Has that servant lived long with Lord Vargrave?” asked the surgeon.

“I believe so,—yes; I recollect his face. Why?”

“And you think him safe and honest?”

“I don’t know; I know nothing of him.”

“Look here, sir,”—and the surgeon pointed to a slight discoloration on one side the throat of the dead man. “This may be accidental—purely natural; his lordship may have died in a fit; there are no certain marks of outward violence, but murder by suffocation might still—”

“But who besides the servant could gain admission? Was the outer door closed?”

“The servant can take oath that he shut the door before

going to bed, and that no one was with his lordship, or in the rooms, when Lord Vargrave retired to rest. Entrance from the windows is impossible. Mind, sir, I do not think I have any right to suspect any one. His lordship had been in very ill health a short time before; had had, I hear, a rush of blood to the head. Certainly, if the servant be innocent, we can suspect no one else. You had better send for more experienced practitioners."

De Montaigne, who had hitherto said nothing, now looked with a hurried glance around the room: he perceived the closet-door, which was ajar, and rushed to it, as by an involuntary impulse. The closet was large, but a considerable pile of wood, and some lumber of odd chairs and tables, took up a great part of the space. De Montaigne searched behind and amidst this litter with trembling haste, — no trace of secreted murder was visible. He returned to the bedroom with a satisfied and relieved expression of countenance. He then compelled himself to approach the body, from which he had hitherto recoiled.

"Sir," said he, almost harshly, as he turned to the surgeon, "what idle doubts are these? Cannot men die in their beds, of sudden death, no blood to stain their pillows, no loop-hole for crime to pass through, but we must have science itself startling us with silly terrors? As for the servant, I will answer for his innocence; his manner, his voice attest it." The surgeon drew back, abashed and humbled, and began to apologize, to qualify, when Lord Doltimore abruptly entered.

"Good heavens!" said he, "what is this? What do I hear? Is it possible? Dead! So suddenly!" He cast a hurried glance at the body, shivered, and sickened, and threw himself into a chair, as if to recover the shock. When again he removed his hand from his face, he saw lying before him on the table an open note. The character was familiar; his own name struck his eye, — it was the note which Caroline had sent the day before. As no one heeded him, Lord Doltimore read on, and possessed himself of the proof of his wife's guilt unseen.

The surgeon, now turning from De Montaigne, who had

been rating him soundly for the last few moments, addressed himself to Lord Doltimore. "Your lordship," said he, "was, I hear, Lord Vargrave's most intimate friend at Paris."

"I *his* intimate friend!" said Doltimore, colouring highly, and in a disdainful accent. "Sir, you are misinformed."

"Have you no orders to give, then, my lord?"

"None, sir. My presence here is quite useless. Good-day to you, gentlemen."

"With whom, then, do the last duties rest?" said the surgeon, turning to Maltravers and De Montaigne. "With the late lord's secretary? — I expect him every moment; and here he is, I suppose," — as Mr. Howard, pale, and evidently overcome by his agitation, entered the apartment. Perhaps, of all the human beings whom the ambitious spirit of that senseless clay had drawn around it by the webs of interest, affection, or intrigue, that young man, whom it had never been a temptation to Vargrave to deceive or injure, and who missed only the gracious and familiar patron, mourned most his memory, and defended most his character. The grief of the poor secretary was now indeed overmastering. He sobbed and wept like a child.

When Maltravers retired from the chamber of death, De Montaigne accompanied him; but soon quitting him again, as Ernest bent his way to Evelyn, he quietly rejoined Mr. Howard, who readily grasped at his offers of aid in the last melancholy duties and directions.

CHAPTER VI.

IF we do meet again, why, we shall smile. — *Julius Cæsar.*

THE interview with Evelyn was long and painful. It was reserved for Maltravers to break to her the news of the sudden death of Lord Vargrave, which shocked her unspeakably; and this, which made their first topic, removed much con-

strait and deadened much excitement in those which followed.

Vargrave's death served also to relieve Maltravers from a most anxious embarrassment. He need no longer fear that Alice would be degraded in the eyes of Evelyn. Henceforth the secret that identified the erring Alice Darvil with the spotless Lady Vargrave was safe, known only to Mrs. Leslie and to Aubrey. In the course of nature, all chance of its disclosure must soon die with them; and should Alice at last become his wife, and should Cleveland suspect (which was not probable) that Maltravers had returned to his first love, he knew that he might depend on the inviolable secrecy of his earliest friend.

The tale that Vargrave had told to Evelyn of his early — but, according to that tale, guiltless — passion for Alice, he tacitly confirmed; and he allowed that the recollection of her virtues, and the intelligence of her sorrows and unextinguishable affection, had made him recoil from a marriage with her supposed daughter. He then proceeded to amaze his young listener with the account of the mode in which he had discovered her real parentage, of which the banker had left it to Alice's discretion to inform her, after she had attained the age of eighteen. And then, simply, but with manly and ill-controlled emotion, he touched upon the joy of Alice at beholding him again, upon the endurance and fervour of her love, upon her revulsion of feeling at learning that, in her unforgotten lover, she beheld the recent suitor of her adopted child.

“And now,” said Maltravers, in conclusion, “the path to both of us remains the same. To Alice is our first duty. The discovery I have made of your real parentage does not diminish the claims which Alice has on me, does not lessen the grateful affection that is due to her from yourself. Yes, Evelyn, we are not the less separated forever. But when I learned the wilful falsehood which the unhappy man, now hurried to his last account, to whom your birth was known, had imposed upon me, — namely, that you were the child of Alice, — and when I learned also that you had been hurried

into accepting his hand, I trembled at your union with one so false and base. I came hither resolved to frustrate his schemes and to save you from an alliance, the motives of which I foresaw, and to which my own letter, my own desertion, had perhaps urged you. New villanies on the part of this most perverted man came to my ear: but he is dead; let us spare his memory. For you—oh, still let me deem myself your friend,—your more than brother; let me hope now that I have planted no thorn in that breast, and that your affection does not shrink from the cold word of friendship.”

“Of all the wonders that you have told me,” answered Evelyn, as soon as she could recover the power of words, “my most poignant sorrow is, that I have no rightful claim to give a daughter’s love to her whom I shall ever idolize as my mother. Oh, now I see why I thought her affection measured and lukewarm. And have I—I destroyed her joy at seeing you again? But you—you will hasten to console, to reassure her! She loves you still,—she will be happy at last; and that—that thought—oh, that thought compensates for all!”

There was so much warmth and simplicity in Evelyn’s artless manner, it was so evident that her love for him had not been of that ardent nature which would at first have superseded every other thought in the anguish of losing him forever, that the scale fell from the eyes of Maltravers, and he saw at once that his own love had blinded him to the true character of hers. He was human; and a sharp pang shot across his breast. He remained silent for some moments; and then resumed, compelling himself as he spoke to fix his eyes steadfastly on hers.

“And now, Evelyn—still may I so call you?—I have a duty to discharge to another. You are loved”—and he smiled, but the smile was sad—“by a younger and more suitable lover than I am. From noble and generous motives he suppressed that love,—he left you to a rival; the rival removed, dare he venture to explain to you his own conduct, and plead his own motives? George Legard—” Maltravers paused. The cheek on which he gazed was tinged with a soft

blush, Evelyn's eyes were downcast, there was a slight heaving beneath the robe.

Maltravers suppressed a sigh and continued. He narrated his interview with Legard at Dover; and, passing lightly over what had chanced at Venice, dwelt with generous eloquence on the magnanimity with which his rival's gratitude had been displayed. Evelyn's eyes sparkled, and the smile just visited the rosy lips and vanished again. The worst because it was the least selfish fear of Maltravers was gone, and no vain doubt of Evelyn's too keen regret remained to chill his conscience in obeying its earliest and strongest duties.

"Farewell!" he said, as he rose to depart; "I will at once return to London, and assist in the effort to save your fortune from this general wreck: LIFE calls us back to its cares and business—farewell, Evelyn! Aubrey will, I trust, remain with you still."

"Remain! Can I not return then to my—to her—yes, let me call her *mother* still?"

"Evelyn," said Maltravers, in a very low voice, "spare me, spare her that pain! Are we yet fit to—" He paused; Evelyn comprehended him, and hiding her face with her hands, burst into tears.

When Maltravers left the room, he was met by Aubrey, who, drawing him aside, told him that Lord Doltimore had just informed him that it was not his intention to remain at Paris, and had more than delicately hinted at a wish for the departure of Miss Cameron. In this emergency, Maltravers bethought himself of Madame de Ventadour.

No house in Paris was a more eligible refuge, no friend more zealous; no protector would be more kind, no adviser more sincere. To her then he hastened. He briefly informed her of Vargrave's sudden death; and suggested that for Evelyn to return at once to a sequestered village in England might be a severe trial to spirits already broken; and declared truly, that though his marriage with Evelyn was broken off, her welfare was no less dear to him than heretofore. At his first hint, Valerie, who took a cordial interest in Evelyn for her own sake, ordered her carriage, and drove at once to Lady

Doltimore's. His lordship was out, her ladyship was ill, in her own room, could see no one, not even her guest. Evelyn in vain sent up to request an interview; and at last, contenting herself with an affectionate note of farewell, accompanied Aubrey to the home of her new hostess.

Gratified at least to know her with one who would be sure to win her affection and soothe her spirits, Maltravers set out on his solitary return to England.

Whatever suspicious circumstances might or might not have attended the death of Lord Vargrave, certain it is that no evidence confirmed and no popular rumour circulated them. His late illness, added to the supposed shock of the loss of the fortune he had anticipated with Miss Cameron, aided by the simultaneous intelligence of the defeat of the party with whom it was believed he had indissolubly entwined his ambition, sufficed to account satisfactorily enough for the melancholy event. De Montaigne, who had been long, though not intimately, acquainted with the deceased, took upon himself all the necessary arrangements, and superintended the funeral; after which ceremony, Howard returned to London; and in Paris, as in the grave, all things are forgotten! But still in De Montaigne's breast there dwelt a horrible fear. As soon as he had learned from Maltravers the charge the maniac brought against Vargrave, there came upon him the recollection of that day when Cesarini had attempted De Montaigne's life, evidently mistaking him in his delirium for another, — and the sullen, cunning, and ferocious character which the insanity had ever afterwards assumed. He had learned from Howard that the outer door had been left ajar when Lord Vargrave was with Maltravers. The writing on the panel, the name of Vargrave, would have struck Castruccio's eye as he descended the stairs; the servant was from home, the apartments deserted; he might have won his way into the bed-chamber, concealed himself in the *armoire*, and in the dead of the night, and in the deep and helpless sleep of his victim, have done the deed. What need of weapons — the suffocating pillows would stop speech and life. What so easy as escape, — to pass into the anteroom; to unbolt the door; to descend

into the courtyard; to give the signal to the porter in his lodge, who, without seeing him, would pull the *cordon*, and give him egress unobserved?

All this was so possible, so probable.

De Montaigne now withdrew all inquiry for the unfortunate; he trembled at the thought of discovering him, of verifying his awful suspicions, of beholding a murderer in the brother of his wife! But he was not doomed long to entertain fear for Cesarini; he was not fated ever to change suspicion into certainty. A few days after Lord Vargrave's burial, a corpse was drawn from the Seine. Some tablets in the pockets, scrawled over with wild, incoherent verses, gave a clew to the discovery of the dead man's friends: and, exposed at the Morgue, in that bleached and altered clay, De Montaigne recognized the remains of Castruccio Cesarini. "He died and made no sign!"

CHAPTER VII.

SINGULA quæque locum teneant sortita.¹ — HORACE : *Ars Poetica*.

MALTRAVERS and the lawyers were enabled to save from the insolvent bank but a very scanty portion of that wealth in which Richard Templeton had rested so much of pride. The title extinct, the fortune gone — so does Fate laugh at our posthumous ambition! Meanwhile Mr. Douce, with considerable plunder, had made his way to America: the bank owed nearly half a million; the purchase money for Lisle Court, which Mr. Douce had been so anxious to get into his clutches, had not sufficed to stave off the ruin, — but a great part of it sufficed to procure competence for himself. How inferior in wit, in acuteness, in stratagem, was Douce to Vargrave; and yet Douce had gulled him like a child! Well said the shrewd

¹ "To each lot its appropriate place."

small philosopher of France — “On peut être plus fin qu’un autre, mais pas plus fin que tous les autres.”¹

To Legard, whom Maltravers had again encountered at Dover, the latter related the downfall of Evelyn’s fortunes; and Maltravers loved him when he saw that, far from changing his affection, the loss of wealth seemed rather to raise his hopes. They parted; and Legard set out for Paris.

But was Maltravers all the while forgetful of Alice? He had not been twelve hours in London before he committed to a long and truthful letter all his thoughts, his hopes, his admiring and profound gratitude. Again, and with solemn earnestness, he implored her to accept his hand, and to confirm at the altar the tale which had been told to Evelyn. Truly he said that the shock which his first belief in Vargrave’s falsehood had occasioned, his passionate determination to subdue all trace of a love then associated with crime and horror, followed so close by his discovery of Alice’s enduring faith and affection, had removed the image of Evelyn from the throne it had hitherto held in his desires and thoughts; truly he said that he was now convinced that Evelyn would soon be consoled for his loss by another, with whom she would be happier than with him; truly and solemnly he declared that if Alice rejected him still, if even Alice were no more, his suit to Evelyn never could be renewed, and Alice’s memory would usurp the place of all living love!

Her answer came: it pierced him to the heart. It was so humble, so grateful, so tender still. Unknown to herself, love yet coloured every word; but it was love pained, galled, crushed, and trampled on; it was love, proud from its very depth and purity. His offer was refused.

Months passed away. Maltravers yet trusted to time. The curate had returned to Brook-Green, and his letters fed Ernest’s hopes and assured his doubts. The more leisure there was left him for reflection, the fainter became those dazzling and rainbow hues in which Evelyn had been robed

¹ One may be more sharp than one’s neighbour, but one can’t be sharper than all one’s neighbours. — ROCHEFOUCAULD.

and surrounded, and the brighter the halo that surrounded his earliest love. The more he pondered on Alice's past history, and the singular beauty of her faithful attachment, the more he was impressed with wonder and admiration, the more anxious to secure to his side one to whom Nature had been so bountiful in all the gifts that make woman the angel and star of life.

Months passed. From Paris the news that Maltravers received confirmed all his expectations, — the suit of Legard had replaced his own. It was then that Maltravers began to consider how far the fortune of Evelyn and her destined husband was such as to preclude all anxiety for their future lot. Fortune is so indeterminate in its gauge and measurement. Money, the most elastic of materials, falls short or exceeds, according to the extent of our wants and desires. With all Legard's good qualities he was constitutionally careless and extravagant; and Evelyn was too inexperienced, and too gentle, perhaps, to correct his tendencies. Maltravers learned that Legard's income was one that required an economy which he feared that, in spite of all his reformation, Legard might not have the self-denial to enforce. After some consideration, he resolved to add secretly to the remains of Evelyn's fortune such a sum as might, being properly secured to herself and children, lessen whatever danger could arise from the possible improvidence of her husband, and guard against the chance of those embarrassments which are among the worst disturbers of domestic peace. He was enabled to effect this generosity unknown to both of them, as if the sum bestowed were collected from the wrecks of Evelyn's own wealth and the profits of the sale of the houses in C——, which of course had not been involved in Douce's bankruptcy. And then if Alice were ever his, her jointure, which had been secured on the property appertaining to the villa at Fulham, would devolve upon Evelyn. Maltravers could never accept what Alice owed to another. Poor Alice! No! not that modest wealth which you had looked upon complacently as one day or other to be his.

Lord Doltimore is travelling in the East, — Lady Dolti-

more, less adventurous, has fixed her residence in Rome. She has grown thin, and taken to antiquities and rouge. Her spirits are remarkably high — not an uncommon effect of laudanum.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

ARRIVED at last
Unto the wished haven. — SHAKESPEARE.

IN the August of that eventful year a bridal party were assembled at the cottage of Lady Vargrave. The ceremony had just been performed, and Ernest Maltravers had bestowed upon George Legard the hand of Evelyn Templeton.

If upon the countenance of him who thus officiated as a father to her he had once wooed as a bride an observant eye might have noted the trace of mental struggles, it was the trace of struggles past; and the calm had once more settled over the silent deeps. He saw from the casement the carriage that was to bear away the bride to the home of another, — the gay faces of the village group, whose intrusion was not forbidden, and to whom that solemn ceremonial was but a joyous pageant; and when he turned once more to those within the chamber, he felt his hand clasped in Legard's.

"You have been the preserver of my life, you have been the dispenser of my earthly happiness; all now left to me to wish for is, that you may receive from Heaven the blessings you have given to others!"

"Legard, never let her know a sorrow that you can guard her from; and believe that the husband of Evelyn will be dear to me as a brother!"

And as a brother blesses some younger and orphan sister bequeathed and intrusted to a care that should replace a father's, so Maltravers laid his hand lightly on Evelyn's golden tresses, and his lips moved in prayer. He ceased;

he pressed his last kiss upon her forehead, and placed her hand in that of her young husband. There was silence; and when to the ear of Maltravers it was broken, it was by the wheels of the carriage that bore away the wife of George Legard!

The spell was dissolved forever. And there stood before the lonely man the idol of his early youth, Alice, — still, perhaps, as fair, and once young and passionate, as Evelyn; pale, changed, but lovelier than of old, if heavenly patience and holy thought, and the trials that purify and exalt, can shed over human features something more beautiful than bloom.

The good curate alone was present, besides these two survivors of the error and the love that make the rapture and the misery of so many of our kind; and the old man, after contemplating them a moment, stole unperceived away.

“Alice,” said Maltravers, and his voice trembled, “hitherto, from motives too pure and too noble for the practical affections and ties of life, you have rejected the hand of the lover of your youth. Here again I implore you to be mine! Give to my conscience the balm of believing that I can repair to you the evils and the sorrows I have brought upon you. Nay, weep not; turn not away. Each of us stands alone; each of us needs the other. In your heart is locked up all my fondest associations, my brightest memories. In you I see the mirror of what I was when the world was new, ere I had found how Pleasure palls upon us, and Ambition deceives! And me, Alice—ah, you love me still! Time and absence have but strengthened the chain that binds us. By the memory of our early love, by the grave of our lost child that, had it lived, would have united its parents, I implore you to be mine!”

“Too generous!” said Alice, almost sinking beneath the emotions that shook that gentle spirit and fragile form, “how can I suffer your *compassion*—for it is but compassion—to deceive yourself? You are of another station than I believed you. How can you raise the child of destitution and guilt to your own rank? And shall I—I—who, Heaven knows! would save you from all regret—bring to you now, when years have so changed and broken the little charm I could

ever have possessed, this blighted heart and weary spirit? Oh, no, no!" and Alice paused abruptly, and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Be it as you will," said Maltravers, mournfully; "but, at least, ground your refusal upon better motives. Say that now, independent in fortune, and attached to the habits you have formed, you would not hazard your happiness in my keeping, — perhaps you are right. To *my* happiness you would indeed contribute; your sweet voice might charm away many a memory and many a thought of the baffled years that have intervened since we parted; your image might dissipate the solitude which is closing round the Future of a disappointed and anxious life. With you, and with you alone, I might yet find a home, a comforter, a charitable and soothing friend. This you could give to me; and with a heart and a form alike faithful to a love that deserved not so enduring a devotion. But I — what can I bestow on you? Your station is equal to my own; your fortune satisfies your simple wants. 'Tis true the exchange is not equal, Alice. Adieu!"

"Cruel!" said Alice, approaching him with timid steps. "If I could — I, so untutored, so unworthy — if I could comfort you in a single care!"

She said no more, but she had said enough; and Maltravers, clasping her to his bosom, felt once more that heart which never, even in thought, had swerved from its early worship, beating against his own!

He drew her gently into the open air. The ripe and mellow noonday of the last month of summer glowed upon the odorous flowers, and the broad sea, that stretched beyond and afar, wore upon its solemn waves a golden and happy smile.

"And ah," murmured Alice, softly, as she looked up from his breast, "I ask not if you have loved others since we parted — man's faith is so different from ours — I only ask if you love me now?"

"More! oh, immeasurably more, than in our youngest days!" cried Maltravers, with fervent passion. "More fondly, more reverently, more trustfully, than I ever loved living being! — even her, in whose youth and innocence I

adored the memory of thee! Here have I found that which shames and bankrupts the Ideal! Here have I found a virtue, that, coming at once from God and Nature, has been wiser than all my false philosophy and firmer than all my pride! You, cradled by misfortune, — your childhood reared amidst scenes of fear and vice, which, while they scared back the intellect, had no pollution for the soul, — your very parent your tempter and your foe; you, only not a miracle and an angel by the stain of one soft and unconscious error, — you, alike through the equal trials of poverty and wealth, have been destined to rise above all triumphant; the example of the sublime moral that teaches us with what mysterious beauty and immortal holiness the Creator has endowed our human nature when hallowed by our human affections! You alone suffice to shatter into dust the haughty creeds of the Misanthrope and Pharisee! And your fidelity to my erring self has taught me ever to love, to serve, to compassionate, to respect the community of God's creatures to which — noble and elevated though you are — you yet belong!"

He ceased, overpowered with the rush of his own thoughts. And Alice was too blessed for words. But in the murmur of the sunlit leaves, in the breath of the summer air, in the song of the exulting birds, and the deep and distant music of the heaven-surrounded seas, there went a melodious voice that seemed as if Nature echoed to his words, and blest the reunion of her children.

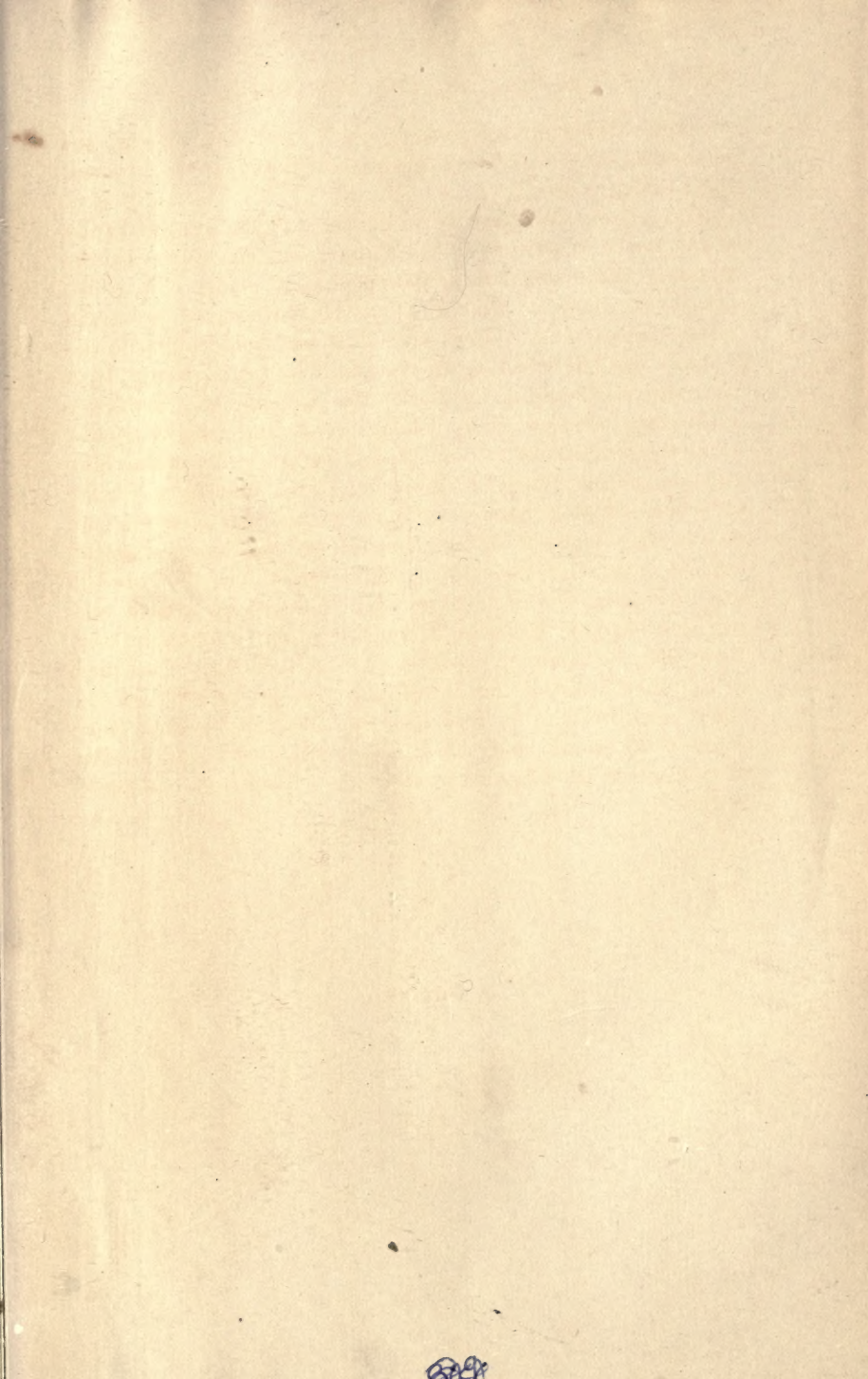
Maltravers once more entered upon the career so long suspended. He entered with an energy more practical and steadfast than the fitful enthusiasm of former years; and it was noticeable amongst those who knew him well, that while the firmness of his mind was not impaired, the haughtiness of his temper was subdued. No longer despising Man as he is, and no longer exacting from all things the ideal of a visionary standard, he was more fitted to mix in the living World, and to minister usefully to the great objects that refine and elevate our race. His sentiments were, perhaps, less lofty, but his actions were infinitely more excellent, and his theories infinitely more wise.

Stage after stage we have proceeded with him through the MYSTERIES OF LIFE. The Eleusinia are closed, and the crowning libation poured.

And Alice!—Will the world blame us if you are left happy at the last? We are daily banishing from our law-books the statutes that disproportion punishment to crime. Daily we preach the doctrine that we demoralize wherever we strain justice into cruelty. It is time that we should apply to the Social Code the Wisdom we recognize in Legislation! It is time that we should do away with the punishment of death for inadequate offences, even in books; it is time that we should allow the morality of atonement, and permit to Error the right to hope, as the reward of submission to its suffering. Nor let it be thought that the close to Alice's career can offer temptation to the offence of its commencement. Eighteen years of sadness, a youth consumed in silent sorrow over the grave of Joy, have images that throw over these pages a dark and warning shadow that will haunt the young long after they turn from the tale that is about to close! If Alice had died of a broken heart, if her punishment had been more than she could bear, *then*, as in real life, you would have justly condemned my moral; and the human heart, in its pity for the victim, would have lost all recollection of the error.—My tale is done.

THE END.







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